

CHAPTER ONE - 1974



LAKE CLARK CONNECTIONS—A LIFE AT TWIN LAKES

[RLP drove back to Anchorage in late March from Iowa and met Babe Alsworth. They drove to Edmonston, Alberta with Fred and Charlie Roehl and picked up a new Taylorcraft. Babe and RLP then flew back to Anchorage arriving about mid-April.]

March 27

During the winter of 1973 & 74 I received many nice letters concerning my book *One Man's Wilderness* and many times I felt guilty about receiving them in flat lander country. If Twin Lakes country was so nice, what was I doing in Iowa.¹

Babe² phoned Merrill Tower to clear him with no receiver and we headed on the last leg of our long journey. Ft. Nelson, B.C. to Anch. is a good hop for one day. Babe flew on home next day and I stayed to take care of last minute business. A few showings of my film and one of them for the National Park Service. They were very much interested and asked if I would shoot some film of Twin Lakes country for them. I would if we could agree on a deal. An easy outfit to deal with and it was soon settled. I purchased a new Bolex tripod for the project and Will Troyer³ loaned (wouldn't sell) me his good Miller fluid head. Another show for the Anch. Prospectors Club⁴ and I have never had a better audience.

Babe came to town and we flew to Port Alsworth⁵ Apr. 17. The usual small jobs to do at his homestead. The far side of the greenhouse roof to recover. Several axe and splitting maul handles to put in. A trip to the mission⁶ for a few small chores. He left me there to fly away with fare paying passengers. The girls⁷ and I took Sig & Leon⁸ on a picnic

¹ RLP flew the Alcan Highway with Babe Alsworth after meeting him in Edmonton, Alberta about April 15, 1974.

² Leon Reid "Babe" Alsworth, Sr. (1910-2004), born in Minnesota, pioneering bush pilot who began flying in Alaska in 1939, homesteaded on Lake Clark in 1942; the village of Port Alsworth was named after him in 1950, variant Tanalian Point.

³ Will Troyer, NPS wildlife biologist and pilot.

⁴ Anchorage Prospectors Club was a social organization that met in a downtown church and had monthly speakers present movies and slide shows documenting travel throughout Alaska.

⁵ Port Alsworth, a small community on Lake Clark that grew up around Babe and Mary Alsworth's home. Tanalian Point is the name of the area before 1950 and dates from 1909. Port Alsworth is about 35 miles south of Twin Lakes.

⁶ Arctic Missions, (now InterAct Ministries) evangelical Christian missionaries headquartered in Boring, Oregon, with missions in Canada and Alaska.

⁷ Florence Hicks and Doris Hagedorn were missionaries from Arctic Missions in Nondalton.

⁸ Sig Alsworth (1965-1982) and Leon Alsworth III who was born in 1964 were the children of Leon "Lonnie" Alsworth, Jr. (1945-1969) and Martha Bedell Alsworth (1948-1996).



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on the creek. “B”⁹ came for me in his Tri-Pacer. A nice quiet easy riding rig.

Babe was in no hurry for me to leave even though I had mentioned I was ready to go. Florence (the mission girl) came to my rescue. Babe and I made a second trip to Nondalton¹⁰ and would go on to Iliamna.¹¹ At the mission I had a couple new faucets to replace some leakers and Babe came after visiting a friend. Florence says “Babe you are in a big hurry. I know Dick is in a big hurry to get to Twin Lakes. I’ll pop some corn if you will stay.” We stayed for popcorn and then on to Iliamna to deliver a fresh frozen salmon. Babe said when we returned to his place “Now Dick I don’t want you to go until you are ready but if you want to go now, we can try it this afternoon.” At three o’clock lunch and we loaded the new “T craft” [Taylorcraft].¹² He would have preferred the big tires on the old one but we would give it a try. Off and flying and she climbed good as we headed for the Kijik [River].¹³ I was interested in snow cover and ice conditions. I could see no caribou trails on the snow patches near Pear Lake.¹⁴ Where were the caribou? Over the mt. and a view of the lakes. Ruffled with remnants of old snow drifts. Not the best for smooth landings. It would be better below Carrithers’ point,¹⁵ I was sure of that. We carried two rocks in case we needed a second choice. Smooth from Hope Creek¹⁶ to the point as we came close I let one go, down down and it hit and skipped. Good enough I let the last one go on the turn for a landing. The ice was hard and smooth, just like concrete. No water along the edge which is a good sign. We stopped 50 yds. out and packed my gear to the cabin. We had to wade soft snow to reach the door. The door was locked and I wondered how it would look inside. Not as I had left it but good enough. My kerosene lantern sitting on the counter. A bag of jelly beans on the window ledge above. The stove pipe for above the roof leaning against the stove. I had oiled my stove when I left but now it had rusted along one edge. That was no problem. Mahlon Troyer and his partner Ray Massey¹⁷ had used it and I was glad I had seen him at Babe’s as they passed on their way to Wide Bay.¹⁸ He told me they had used it and seemed peaved when I said I had heard that they did.

Babe allowed it looked pretty good and after visiting a few minutes he decided to head for home. He says “you know this will be my first chance to fly this airplane without a load.” He was anxious to see how it would clear the mts. on a straight course to Port

⁹ Wayne “Bee” Alsworth, son of Babe and Mary Alsworth, is a pilot and aircraft mechanic.

¹⁰ Nondalton, a Dena’ina village on Sixmile Lake, about 22 miles west of Port Alsworth; Nundaltn is a Dena’ina word for “lake extends below.”

¹¹ Iliamna, hub village for the Iliamna – Lake Clark country, about 35 miles SW of Port Alsworth. Iliamna dates from about 1920, variant Seversens or Seversen’s Roadhouse; Nilavena is a Dena’ina word for “islands lake,” Iliamna Lake.

¹² Taylorcraft or “T craft,” small single engine aircraft favored by Babe Alsworth. “T crafts” were manufactured by Taylorcraft Aircraft Company in Alliance, Ohio.

¹³ Kijik River is a glacial river that heads east of Twin Lakes and flows 18 miles to Lake Clark; Ch’ak’daltnu is the Dena’ina word for “animals walk out stream.”

¹⁴ Pear Lake, a small lake about 8 miles south of lower Twin Lakes.

¹⁵ RLP’s Carrithers’ point, location about 300 yards NE of the Proenneke site on upper Twin Lakes, named for Gale “Spike” (1898?-1985?) and Hope Carrithers (1908?-) who first brought RLP to Twin Lakes in 1962 from Kodiak Island.

¹⁶ RLP’s Hope Creek, glacial creek that enters upper Twin Lakes about 125 yards south of the Proenneke site.

¹⁷ Mahlon Troyer lived for a time at Port Alsworth on land provided him by Babe Alsworth. After his son drowned in Hardenburg Bay the family moved to the Kenai Peninsula, later Troyer died in a plane crash. Nothing is known of Ray Massey.

¹⁸ Wide Bay, a bay on the Pacific side of the Alaska Peninsula about 20 miles SW of Lower Ugashik Lake.

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Alsworth. He took off and climbed fast. I stood and watched him out of sight. Silence closed in around me and it was a good feeling. This was the way I preferred it. Now I was geared to my own planning. I knew what I was going to do.

April 30

Clear, calm & 20° when I looked out. I had slept like a log but was awake long before sun up. I hadn't seen or heard my birds and wondered when they would find me. The only bird I had heard yesterday was a raven. I was up before the sun and had my spuds, bacon, & egg plus a bowl of oatmeal. Today would be a day to get further organized and keep track of the bears. Babe was coming so I had better stay close.

I spotted the four bears where I had last seen them last night. The cubs were stirring but the mother lay still.

It was 10:15 when I heard Babe and soon he was on the ice out front. Three dozen eggs yesterday and four today. I told him seven dozen is too many but he says "eat lots of eggs." About 60 lbs. of spuds, my sugar, beans and seasonings I had bought in Anch., 25 lbs. of oatmeal. Now I was really stocked. About all I could use in the food line was vinegar and I have a fair supply of that.

How did the "T craft" take the mts.? "Fine, I think it shortens the trip about five minutes by going straight across" he said.

He would be heading back and we decided on May 15th for the next trip. Put a little circle of spruce boughs on the ice and leave it till the ice goes bad he said.

May 4 - Clear, Calm & 25°.

A beautiful clear morning and I hadn't expected it. I figured that it would be overcast and I would stay home and celebrate my birthday.¹⁹ I did sleep in till 4:45.

My bears had stayed put during the night and it would be nearly nine before the old girl gave the order to grub roots.

Again the call of swan and I looked without success. The next call I spotted a wedge very high. I should have put the camera outside for again I heard them and louder. Here they came much lower and snow white against the deep blue sky. I rushed for the camera but was too late. Once they are going away they don't show white any longer.

Today I would go up country again. I would try for some ptarmigan pictures. Only two days since I was there and I was surprised that the lake ice had deteriorated so much. Sand & dirt blows on the ice from the river flat in winter and this hastens the melting in spring. Ptarmigan right away and a wild pair. Run along ahead and into the

¹⁹ RLP was born May 4, 1917 in Primrose, Iowa.

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brush. Then one rooster in the top of a small spruce. Another one and this one very cooperative. I soon learned why. The hen was under a spruce nearby. When she flew so did he.

It was 2:15 when I reached the lake shore and headed down. The sun very bright on the snow white lake ice. One hr. and five minutes walking in a straight line to reach Carrithers' point. I sat down on the beach to check on my bears and was surprised to see the sheep bedded near where the bears had spent the night. Then I picked up the bears no more than 200 yds. from the sheep and working on a big slide. I came on down and took care of my camera gear. Put my biscuits in the sun to rise. This had been a pretty good birthday. While I worked about the cabin I heard the cubs squalling and rushed out to check. I saw no reason for the crying. Two with the mother and the third working a hundred yds. up country. The three headed that way and that was the last I saw of any. I started a letter and when I went to check - no bears. Perhaps they were there but in a swag. I hope they stay a few more days at least. The sheep had a good spot above so they hadn't climbed. No birds yet. I left a little meat scrap on the table out side. The first camp robber to get near would have it in a flash. It has been laying there for two days.

May 7 - Clear, Calm & 30°.

First thing after breakfast I searched for the cow moose and spotted a black bear just above the cottonwoods. Some difference between the black & brown bear. The brownie would be up on the mt. digging roots. Evidently the black bear was after the first shoots of green stuff. Brush is budding on the south slope and leaves will soon show.

I found my moose on the big slide - bedded down just her head and neck sticking out from behind a spruce. I would try for her so made preparations. I figured she would see me cross so I headed for Falls Creek²⁰ and then angled up when the spruce hid me. I traveled close to shore and the bank and timber covered me on that stretch.

Something dark out on the ice and crossing from the base of Crag Mt.²¹ to the big slide country which was my destination. I was surprised to learn it was a porcupine. The first I had ever seen on the lake ice. I would meet him at the beach and get some pictures. It so happened that the bank was low right there and the cow moose was above. I had to let him go or risk being seen.

May 9 - Partly Cloudy, Calm & 36°.

Today was due to be the day of days. I slept in a bit and was up at 5 o'clock. Hotcakes out of the way and washing dishes when three camp robbers came. My birds! - I knew it was

²⁰ RLP's Falls Creek, a small creek on upper Twin Lakes across from the Proenneke Site.

²¹ RLP's Crag Mountain, a 5,328 ft. peak immediately east of the Proenneke Site.



them. A scrap of hotcake and one came to my hand. Little tender bill and I knew it was. I noticed that his beak doesn't quite close and that's the way it was when I left him last fall. Strong enough to tear chunks out of a hotcake now. The second one wouldn't come to my hand but would come close if I dropped it on the ground. The third was shy and stayed in the spruce. It is good to have them back again.

A few minutes later and I was outside brushing my teeth. Caribou, seven head of them passed from the point going down. Some with antlers and one with only one side. They trudged slowly down the lake heads low as if packing a heavy load. Then I spotted more along the far shore and a half mile below Jerre's cabin.²² About 20 there. Down by the gravel bank a long string of them on the ice. Caribou in the brush at the lower end of the lake. Who was the Cheechako who predicted very few caribou would come to the lakes this spring?

I crossed to the high bank on the up country side of Beech Creek.²³ From there maybe I could see them go and perhaps get ahead of them. As if there never was a caribou and they had to be there. No doubt they traveled the beach below the bank and my line of vision. A beautiful shot up the lake from there and I ended a roll of film.

At the cabin and I heard a parky squirrel. There he was at the rock pile on the beach. I had left him there last fall. I took him a chunk of hotcake and I had no more than reached the cabin when he was sitting straight as a picket the hotcake bit in both hands. He is the guy that ate a batch of my cabbage last fall. The birds came for a hand out. It was just like old times.

May 11 - Partly Cloudy, Breeze dn. & 30°.

I was up at 4:30 to greet the new day. My birds were here before that by quite a bit. I heard them bumping the spruce buck horns on the end of the ridge log. The second bird came to my hand as if it had been a regular thing.

After breakfast a check of the hump and Crag Mt. No sign of life there. I walked out on the ice to check the moose pasture. One caribou cow over above the cottonwoods and while I watched a second and third cow appeared. Then two out on the lake ice from behind Carrithers' point. They seemed afraid of something on the beach and later I determined it was Terry Shurtleff's²⁴ pile of gas cans under the spruce on the beach. The two trotted across the lake and more followed. There was seven in all. I took glasses and scope and went up to the point. More caribou cows - a good bunch of them and they were also crossing the lake. 24 was my count and all cows - most with antlers. They stopped out in the middle and milled around before finally deciding to go up country. They headed

²² Jerre's cabin was across the lake from the Proenneke cabin and was built by Homer resident Jerre Wills. Wills was a commercial fisherman and trapper.

²³ RLP's Beech Creek, a small creek on the south side of lower Twin Lakes, named for a crashed Beech aircraft. In *One Man's Wilderness* the creek was referred to as Bonanza Creek.

²⁴ Terry Shurtleff, a pilot and sport hunter who left a fuel cache on Twin Lakes.

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for the mouth of Glacier Creek. And there above (up country) Glacier Creek²⁵ mouth was a cow moose and once I thought I got a glimpse of a dark yearling calf but I couldn't be sure. She was on the move and stopped often to stick her big nose high testing the wind.

May 12 – Snowing, Breeze dn. & 35°.

Visibility was low and the ground was white when I looked out at five. A strong breeze down the lake. I was glad to see it. The chore I had to do today would be much easier because of it.

Fried spuds for breakfast along with the usual bacon, egg, and oatmeal. My hot water, vinegar, and honey which I find the best drink of all.

Chores out of the way I made ready to write letters. Add to what I had and write more. The snow stopped but the wind continued down the lake. First get a fresh kettle of beans to simmering. Make the fire do double duty today. My two birds came for a hand out and were gone for the day. I didn't see mr. parky squirrel until afternoon. He sat up straight on top of the rock pile and munched a sourdough biscuit and then retired below. I must cut down on his ration or he will forget what work is. Not so with the camp robber. He is on the go from daylight till dark and anything he can pick up for free is just a bonus.

I wrote till late afternoon and then took time out to get cleaned up and do laundry. Supper over and my journal out of the way I went at it again. Some letters had gone [un]answered too long. Blue spots down country but a few small flakes of snow still come with the good breeze from up country. Temp. 37°.

May 13 – Partly Cloudy, Calm & 35°.

Babe had said, with spruce boughs, make a circle on the ice and leave it there as long as the ice is good. I had better get that chore out of the way. I didn't like to cut a small spruce for boughs. I would trim up the blow down tree behind Spike's cabin. With glasses & scope and my trusty axe I went up to the point. Another good look across the lake but no success on moose. I got my boughs plus a couple lengths of green fire wood for Spike's stove. I stuffed a burlap sack with tips of branches and went out on the ice. I suspected those rams on the mt. would take a dim view of this operation.

I would not only make a circle but lay out a runway too. Forty five feet wide and several hundred feet long. The markers along the side fifty feet apart. A circle twenty feet in diameter on the Port Alsworth end.

A large body of open water at the upper end of the lower lake.²⁶ The upper lake

²⁵ RLP's Glacier Creek is a small creek that enters upper Twin Lakes on the north side of the lake.

²⁶ Lower Twin Lakes, is about 6 miles long and forms the western part of the Twin Lakes. The Proenneke Site is about 5 miles east of lower Twin Lakes. Nlqjiden Vena is the Dena'ina word for "lakes that flow into one another."

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rising very slowly and so more water is going through the stream. I didn't set up the camera I would see if I could catch a fish first. First cast of the season and the reel whirled. The super duper [lure] plunked in out beyond the fast water. I reeled in slowly. Would I get a strike first cast. The lure came to the end of the gravel bar under the fast water and stopped. I pulled and it moved. I had a fish on. A good one by the way the rod bent and the reel turned. Probably a laker with a boney mouth. He would drop the hook if he got an inch of slack. I played him awhile and worked him in and I knew before it got close it was no lake trout. The color was wrong. A big Dolly [Varden] or arctic char. Hooked good both top and bottom so he wouldn't get away. A stone on the rod and I went for my camera gear. Sunshine every where but here and I waited for the cloud to move but clouds don't move. They just build up on one side and dissipate on the other. I scooped out a couple holes near the ice along shore. I wanted some pictures there. I moved him over and he was patient while I removed the hooks. A shot or two and I decided to move him to the other pool which looked much nicer. I would get some close ups there. After that I would slide him over the dam and under the ice with the camera running. No struggle while I moved him. A real nice fish, a good nineteen inches long. He lay in that nice pool along the ice. A pretty picture in the making. I moved back to the camera and before I realized it he was gone. Just swam and swam right over the dam. There was a spruce nearby. I should have cut a few boughs to fence the pool. I didn't mind him getting away but would liked to have a movie of it. I tried and tried and got one strike but no fish. An arctic tern, the first of the season, was working nearby.

I glassed the country and could count 16 sheep on Falls Mt.²⁷ and two on Black Mt.²⁸ No lambs or any lone ewes up in the rocks.

May 14 - Partly Cloudy, Calm & 36°.

Frank Bell²⁹ said years ago, "I feel better at Twin Lakes than any place I have ever been." I believe that is true. I sleep like a log. I wonder how Frank feels in Pekin, Illinois.

My early morning check. No lambs that I could see. Rams not four but six on Crag Mt. and close to the ridge leading up. Just in the edge of the rough stuff. The two half curls were there and the four, all good ones. It was six o'clock when I headed for the point with the scope to check for moose across. While I glassed the far side I heard the clack of horns on Crag Mt. Was those big guys bumping head at this time of year? I put the scope on them. Soon I saw two standing shoulder [to shoulder] and reaching with that inboard front foot. One turned and trotted back a few paces - turned again and stood head on. The other wasn't interested. Many false starts but pretty soon two did come together and it was four or five seconds before the sound of heads bumping reached me.

²⁷ RLP's Falls Mountain, a 4,790 ft. peak on north side of upper Twin lakes across from the Proenneke Site.

²⁸ RLP's Black Mountain, a 5,363 ft. peak on the north side of lower Twin Lakes.

²⁹ Frank Bell (1901-1992), a Kenai Peninsula based trapper who built 3 cabins in the Twin Lakes area in the 1960's and later sold them to Jerre Wills.



Too early for pictures. The sun was still behind Crag Mt. I headed for the edge of the timber on the creek trail and parked myself by a spruce. All four would get in the act at times. Two bump and bounce back and another would be on his way in to give that down hill guy a second blow. Once I heard four in rapid succession. If only I could get pictures. I could climb on the lake side of the mt. but the sun would be in my face – no good. It would be a real tough chore to get by them below without moving them. Keeping under the bank going up Hope Creek would be murder.

First thing this morning when I went to the woodshed for kindling[,] I was startled (when I entered) by a porkypine standing on my fish cleaning table and chewing on the end logs of my woodshed. Now! there was a porkypine³⁰ for pictures on the lake ice. I would take him out and turn him loose headed across. So – I urged him to enter a gas can box. I covered it with a board and set my chopping block on top.

At the cabin the tree squirrel perched on the stone house of the ground squirrel. The ground squirrel at the base of it. Finally both of them on the gravel within two feet of each other. The tree squirrel scampered away. The ground squirrel learns fast. He recognized me and didn't hide in the rocks when I went to the beach with a chunk of biscuit. I squatted down and held it out. Cautiously he came and took it from my fingers. Sat there and started to fill his cheeks and then ran to his house in the rocks.

The biscuits in the pan and film changed. 14 rolls ready to send in now. Now for the porkypine. I lugged my gear and the box of porky out on the ice and turned him loose towards the far side. A porcupine can lope and he did a few steps but only a few. A fast walk is his normal top speed. I found this project was not so easy. All I could get was departing shots. If I circled right or left so did the porky. His stern always towards me. He must steer by radar for he was always going directly away even though his back was turned. If I got too close he stopped and then no sound and he might turn towards me to whirl again when I moved. It's a long way across the lake as a porkypine paces it. When we got well over I circled very wide and waited on the beach. As soon as he heard the camera he turned and headed back. Back on the ice and him straightened out. A narrow strip of water between the ice and the beach. He wanted on the beach but didn't like the water. He turned this way and that. I encouraged him a bit and he finally slid over the edge and headed for the rocks. A good ending for the 75 ft. of film I wasted on the little porkypine.

May 16 – Overcast, Breeze up & 30°.

I came up along the edge and found a place to get off of the ice near Jerre's cabin. Snow hides the sins of winter. Now with it gone cans and trash lay every where. Nine carcasses of foxes lay in a heap. Fur buyers are not particular these days. These skeletons still had the feet attached. Nine foxes and one small wolf. I should waste some film on that

³⁰ "Porkypine," RLP's quaint spelling of his habitual nemesis, the porcupine, has been retained.

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display and then a shot of my little decoration (in the cabin) which reads "Is it proper that the Wilderness and its creatures should suffer because we came?" With the weather thickening down country I headed for home. The ice 35" as of today but some places it is soft which gives one an uneasy feeling now and then.

May 20 – High Thin Overcast, Calm & 36°.

I traveled the beach on up and found that there was a perfect place to leave the ice at the old Watts Waddell sheep camp.³¹ Many tracks of caribou but nothing fresh. I headed for the big slide and a view of the flats. I expected to see caribou across the flats on the meadows by the old beaver ponds. If I was lucky I would see a bear digging Eskimo potato in the dry water courses. I saw nothing except a few ptarmigan in the willow brush. On my way to the slide I had made a good find. A backpacker's cup. 5" across the top, 3" across the bottom and 1 ½" deep. A handle of wire and the type that hooks over a belt. One of Pollard's³² hunters had probably lost it as it wasn't more than 400 yds. from the campsite. A good sturdy cup and stamped in the metal "Made in Japan." I came off of the slide and headed up the river. A chance of seeing a moose feeding on the slope. I turned in to visit the beaver pond. It doesn't appear that beavers used it last winter. Some years they do and others not. A pair of Barrow's goldeneye ducks were there and it was the same last time in spring (a year ago). Probably the same pair. On up and I hit a bear track that made me think of my big pistol hanging on the bunk post.

The front track a strong seven inches wide. A pretty impressive track for Twin Lakes country. Maybe a day or two old. I would bet it is the same big bear that got the moose calf last spring. A little farther on and little bear tracks, lots of them and then the remains of an old caribou carcass. Probably a hunter had killed it last fall. Again I climbed the mt. slope for a good view of the flat. I wanted to see that good bear. I glassed the flats and far slope for an hr. and didn't see anything move. More places he could be and not be seen than the other way around. Let him move very far on the flats and I would pick him up.

May 21 – Clear, Calm & 26°.

Another fine morning and I was up in good time for today I was going on a long journey. I would go at least as far as Trail Butte³³ (on the Nondalton-Telaquana trail).³⁴ A good hike from here as it is a good two hrs. hike below the lower lake.

³¹ "Watts Waddell sheep camp," RLP refers to Hugh Watson and Guy Waddell (1890-1960), a big game guide. The camp was at the N end of upper Twin Lakes and was used by Waddell in the late 1940s and 1950s. Waddell was an old time guide and Watson frequently worked with him as an assistant, both men lived in Homer.

³² George Pollard, a second generation Alaskan from Kasilof and big game guide who hunted sheep at Twin Lakes.

³³ RLP's Trail Butte, a 2,275 ft. promontory south of the Chilikadrotna River along the Telaquana Trail.

³⁴ Telaquana Trail, a 50-mile long Dena'ina trail that connected villages at Kijik on Lake Clark with those at Telaquana Lake.



On my morning check I spotted a 2nd new lamb. Born at nearly the same spot as the first one.

The lake was in good shape with the temp. 24° during the night. I would travel the ice of this lake but not the lower. A pair of Barrow goldeneyes right where the upper lake dumps into the stream. A gentle pair and I got as close as I wanted.

I headed for the [Trail] butte and felt sure when I crossed the old trail. A low saddle and leading to the river crossing was a natural gentle slope. I could just see those dog sleds sail on down grade to the river. I climbed to the summit of the butte. I had been there before but didn't stay overnight. No water on top but a few snow banks on the lee side. I pulled off my shoes and socks and buried my tired feet in the snow for a few seconds. Cold for just a little while will make your feet good for many more miles.

I dug out my film and rations. I had brought along five hundred feet of film, which is a load. Also my big pistol, mummy bag, combat rations & smoked fish. With my heavy tripod, Miller head and Bolex I was probably packing a good 40 lbs.

The sun was still high. 5 pm when I arrived [at Trail Butte]. Warm and a good breeze coming up the Chilikadrotna.³⁵ It was nice up there. I ate and glassed the country full circle. I could see a couple more single cows a long way off. I guessed they had calves. Across the river a little bunch of caribou and towards the Kijik [River] another bunch. Possibly one calf with them. When the sun got low I could see more. A long way off but a change in color told me it was game moving about feeding. One lone cow on a high flat plateau towards the mt. High up and no chance to get close to her. I turned in at 8:30 and lay watching the sun light leave the flats and then the mts. It calmed and now the mosquitoes came. No more than a half dozen but they didn't sleep and it didn't get cold enough although in the morning there would be frost at the base of the butte. I slept a little bit - three hrs. perhaps and was awake when the sun cleared the mts. on the far side of Turquoise Lake.³⁶ I was ready to go at five. Ptarmigan roosters had cackled all night and now I could hear old squaw ducks on the river and so started

May 26 - Partly Cloudy & possibly 32°.

Two pairs of swan added to the sound. Two caribou crossed a good distance ahead of me as I passed the gravel buttes. Farther on I spooked a bull the first bull I have seen this spring. Past the gravel knoll and the spruce knoll - I traveled the shoreline of the lakes. From there only a mile to Arlen's cabin.³⁷ The bay...is very shallow there and near shore I could see water pushing up and creating quite a disturbance. A spring under the lake floor. Later as the day warmed I saw several. I was at the cabin by 7:45 and set about to

³⁵ Chilikadrotna River, flows 55 miles W draining Twin Lakes. It is the largest tributary of the Mulchatna River and is in the Nushagak drainage; Dena'ina word is thought to mean "tongue river."

³⁶ Turquoise Lake, a large glacial lake about 12 miles north of Twin Lakes and the source of the Mulchatna River; Vandaztun Vena is the Dena'ina word for "caribou hair lake."

³⁷ Arlen Colclature or Koklatcher, nothing is known of this individual except that he built a small plywood hunting cabin on the SW end of lower Twin Lakes in the 1960's. RLP called the bay Lake Trout Bay.



clean it up and cook myself a big feed of oatmeal. I had left a sack of it 2 yrs. ago and no one had used any. A can of beans with wiener chunks was also my breakfast. This squared away I lay down and slept a half hr. or so. I still had a long way to go. At least four hrs. steady going.

May 26 - Clear, Calm & 30°.

We did it again – a perfect morning. It would have to be Sunday but I could fix that I would take Monday off if it was cloudy.

Six head of sheep on Allen Mt.³⁸ was all I could see on the far side. Down country below Beech Creek I could see three caribou that I took to be bulls. I wanted to take a tour up into the big basin behind Crag Mt. See if the rams were there and if any of those caribou cows had calves up there.

I was away early headed up over the hump and along that miserable slope of Crag Mt. Steep, loose rocks in the brush, rock slides, deep washes, you name it that slope has it.

This morning from in front of my cabin the morning sun just lacked half of its diameter of clearing Crag mt. peak. Now, from here on the sun will be in the clear from sunrise to sunset. I traveled in the shade of the mt. for a time but finally the sun got around and it was in my eyes. I saw the caribou cow and her calf but failed to recognize her until she became alarmed and headed down country. At the entrance to the basin I saw a snow white ptarmigan which is a rare sight at this date. Over the hump guarding the basin and nothing in sight. The very long slope up to the saddle still deep in snow. I would circle left up under the peak to the high ridge over looking the river up country from the lake. I saw no cows and calves but did see tracks of both. The rams had been there no more than a few days ago. I ran into snow a half mile from the top. Deep washes are usually good. The snow is packed and good going. It is shallow snow 3 ft. or less that suffers from the sun. The snow will soften all the way down. I ran into trouble no more than a few hundred yds. from the top. Soft snow and I had a battle getting to the dry rocky slope along side. On top at last and a beautiful sight it was. Clear as a bell. Calm and the sun really warm. To the south Iliamna Volcano³⁹ was putting out a huge cloud that rose and flattened then trailed to eastward. I have seen the volcano from the high ridges many times but never with such a display of activity. To the east and the high mts. I tried to map a trail to Lake Clark Pass.⁴⁰ Some one told me "I think you would have some ridges to cross." I had thought one could climb onto the glacier and travel across it and down the far side.

The sun was very bright and warm. I pulled off my boots and socks – laid back on a grassy sheep bed and took a nap.

³⁸ RLP's Allen Mountain, a 6,340 ft. peak on the north side of upper Twin Lakes named by RLP for his Kodiak friend Roy Allen who hunted sheep near there in 1965.

³⁹ Mt. Iliamna, a 10,016 ft. volcanic peak about 45 miles SE of Twin Lakes.

⁴⁰ Lake Clark Pass provides a 50 mile long pass through the Chigmit Mountains, a section of mountains extending about 140 miles between the Aleutian and Alaska Ranges. The pass connects Cook Inlet with the Bristol Bay. The Dena'ina word for Lake Clark is Qizhje Vena, "many people gather lake."



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The sun moved around – it clouded – a breeze came cool over the ridge. I could see caribou cows with calves up in the head of Lofstedt Creek.⁴¹ Those cows are wise. They leave the river bottoms where the predators are and climb up into the snow country where there is a few bare knolls with feed.

I surveyed the possibility of climbing Crag peak. I was only a few hundred feet below. Rough going and I would want both hands free. The Japanese pack frame for the tripod.

I thought of the lake ice and Babe as I neared the hump. Just supposin' I came to my cabin and found that new "T craft" submerged wings to the ice on the lake. Babe perched on top of the wing waiting for me to come home. I was glad to see it wasn't true. A fire going, water on to heat, biscuits rising. A sandwich made and I heard a plane. The first to come near since I came. Sure enough the red & black "T craft." I went out on the beach and waved "Yankee go home." He circled and came by lower. Ok! he called down. I motioned go home go home. Again he went up past Carrithers' point and throttled back. He was coming in to land. I really got frantic and gave him the old wave off. He opened the throttle twenty feet above the ice and flew the length of it. Couldn't he see my cross at the end of the runway. The field is closed, go home. He climbed down country and came back. I suspected he would drop my mail. I went out on the flat. His door came open and down came a yellow mail sack. It landed back in the timber and I took a bearing and hurried to get it. I was waving it as he came back by on his way home.

Mail, lots of mail but it would have to wait until I got caught up with my chores. I read a few letters while my biscuits baked. I saw strange names on some and opened one. An Air Force boy in Texas. He had read my book ten times and wants to come to Twin Lakes. Build a cabin maybe two or three miles from mine. Any information I could give would be appreciated.

May 30 – Clear, Calm & 40°.

I got off to a bad start this morning first thing. The first spoon full of my good oatmeal tasted like Fels naphtha soap... I stirred it vigorously and I had soap suds. I won't mention any names but somebody put soap powder instead of dry milk in my oatmeal. Then, on the way to the woodshed there was one of my rabbits off to the side fifteen feet picking my new fireweed. Me, I go up to Spike's⁴² for greens to let mine multiply and this character picks them one by one. Cuts them at the ground and then chop chop from the big end towards the top.

With all this tropical weather my roof is getting dry as tinder. It would really burn if a hot spark dropped into it. I packed six buckets of water and slung it on with a long handled stew pan and then two buckets more for good measure.

⁴¹ RLP's Lofstedt Creek, a small creek into upper Twin Lakes and named for Kenai based pilot and guide Vernon "Bud" Loftstedt who had a cabin built there in the early 60s.

⁴² Gale "Spike" Carrithers' cabin was about 300 yards NE of the Proenneke Site.



I headed for the woodshed and here came a parky squirrel. Was it Freddy. I came back for some biscuit and he met me at the corner of the cabin. He took it and headed for his stone house but was soon back cheeks bulging. I gave him more and he sat right there at my hand before he headed for his house. Later I saw him heading for the point and off on another tour. I hadn't seen the little guy for days and figured he had met with foul play.

Today I would stick around. Some repairing to do on my camera carrying bag. Cut some wood. This all the time burning and no cutting is not good. The temp. climbed to nearly 70° in the warm part of the day. Babe's airstrip has now turned blue. The sign that it is ready to breakup. Along the edge of the ice it measures about seven or eight inches and so loose I can paddle through it in the canoe.

Write letters, that was another job. A good wide strip of open water for floats now but I doubt that Babe will come till June 15th if then. If he puts the floats on the old "T craft" he may make it by then.

My oleo margarine and eggs went into my cooler box today and I notice the sourdough that I took out is starting to work. That little shot in the arm did it.

Near supper time and I paddled up to the point for fireweed green. I am real happy with the foam rubber construction workers kneeling pads (knee protectors). Very comfortable and the cold doesn't come through.

June 9 - Clear, Calm & 34°.

Sunday morning and a beautiful day coming up. It was due to be the start of the airplane season. I would liked to have gone up country but I half expected Babe. I figured that he didn't have floats on the new "T craft" yet but would the old one. So - I wouldn't go far. My early morning check made it easier. I was very much surprised to see another blond bear on Allen Mt. Straight across and up under the lower out crops. Lots of morning sun I would just go over and see what I could come up with. I paddled straight across to the bare knoll but on the way I noticed the bear wasn't feeding much and walking a lot. Moving down country so I paddled down to Falls Creek. When I beached I knew he would beat me to the canyon so I set up on the beach for a couple long shots. He stayed low and I figured he would cross between the waterfalls and sure enough in ten minutes he showed up on the down country side of the falls but in the canyon. I knew where he would climb out as I have climbed out there too. I picked the spot to start the camera. A nice green patch at the base of a rock face. Twenty five feet to go and the bear dropped in his tracks. Time to take five in the warm sun. I waited, no sign of life. It was dead calm on the lake but I knew if I headed up the trail I would soon feel a light breeze at my back. The air would be moving up the canyon like smoke up a chimney. Never climb below a bear in calm air. But what did I have to lose? The bear was on the move anyway. I would climb and see how close I could get. At rest rock I was in the clear but to low to see the bear



laying down. I set up and waited thinking my scent would reach him and he would move on out. No bear and I climbed again to a good view. I left the camera set up and moved across the mt. I had a fair view of where he had been but there was a low ridge along that climbing ledge. I was most sure my bear had moved out. Probably dropped back to the creek and went up the canyon and over the big pasture to Emerson Creek.⁴³

Another plane and this time an orange one up the far side. It circled and landed at the point. With the glasses I recognized it as Howard Bowman's⁴⁴ souped up Stinson Voyager Stationwagon. He hesitated and headed down for my beach. I had better head for home. As I paddled across I saw he and his wife⁴⁵ over at the mouth of Hope Creek. They met me as I beached. Said he was up at Babe's and asked him where my cabin was located. "Halfway up on the right side and say take his mail along." So they brought my mail. They had to get back so couldn't stay for supper. Did Babe have the floats on the new one yet? No, but this week they would put them on. Will it be legal on floats. (Howard works for F.A.A.). Well, I think nearly so. He had the blue prints for installation. He has the old one on floats but not in the water yet. Teen camp⁴⁶ in progress at Babe's now. He had given them some land and the shop building. Where would Bee work on airplanes? Under a tree I guess. Bee is busy sawing 2x4's for his house now.

Well they had to go. We took a little tour of my layout. Howard was very much interested in my fireplace. They took my outgoing mail and flew away.

June 17 – Partly Cloudy, Calm & 35°.

A plane coming up and it was that [Alaska] Fish & Game Goose again. On by and up the lake. Soon it was back and on down and then here it came again and letting down for a landing. I packed the canoe back from the beach and turned it end on. I knew what the blast of those two engines will do to a broad side canoe. He tried the beach once. It was soft. He turned out and came in again. Hanging by one wheel and he shut her down. The man on the right slid the window open and asked if this was Lofstedt's cabin. They had a load of gas in 50 gal. drums to unload there. I told them where to find it and thought it strange when they acted as if they didn't know there was a cabin up there. The pilot thought it was here but close to it was a 900 ft. airstrip. Whose camp was this and I told them and asked if they had seen the book *One Man's Wilderness*. Never heard of it but the copilot took my name and said he would get one.

The reason for the gas cache – going to count the caribou. A helicopter would be here as well as that Super Cub. They had left a load of gas at Gatano's beach.⁴⁷ Couldn't

⁴³ RLP's Emerson Creek, a large creek that enters upper Twin Lakes from the north near the connecting stream; named for sheep hunter Bob Emerson (1920-2001). The Dena'ina name is Ts'izsdlen, "flows straight."

⁴⁴ Howard Bowman (1929-2003), long time Lake Clark resident starting in 1936, who worked for the FAA at Iliamna in 1974.

⁴⁵ Letitia "Tish" Bowman, wife of Howard Bowman and an artist.

⁴⁶ Tanalian Bible Camp (TBC) was located at Port Alsworth, on a donated part of Babe Alsworth's homestead, first year of operations were 1974.

⁴⁷ Ralph Gatano (1903-?), a hunting guide and pilot from the Kenai, who had a hunting cabin at a natural landing strip on the south side of lower Twin Lakes.



get in at the lower end – too shallow. The pilot said he had guided here back in 1960. Took a worlds record caribou out of here. He knew Fred Cowgill,⁴⁸ Watts Waddell, all of them. Another plane and it was the Super Cub. It cruised on by and then came back and landed. The Goose and the Cub set like ducks off shore while they held a meeting. They headed up country but the Goose didn't go so good – he hadn't raised his landing gear. So there would be much flying going on around here. I would have to talk to those boys and maybe they would report the location of the big herd of caribou if they see it.

Something else I would like to find is nesting swan. On my trip to Trail Tutte I saw two pair but they were flying and went down the river. And too maybe they will see that big mineral lick Lyman Nichols⁴⁹ told me about.

Doing dishes and the Cub went down again. Those boys were really flying today. It had sprinkled a good shower but had faired up again. I was writing when here came the Cub back. They came low and swung back by the point for a landing. A tall blond slim guy in the back seat and a heavy man in front. The reason for all the flying – looking for the big herd. They had it spotted over by Telaquana⁵⁰ Lake a week ago and later sent the helicopter out for a count and they couldn't find the herd. The helicopter is coming again tomorrow and they had to find the herd. They found it south of Snipe Lake⁵¹ and moving farther away. It had passed below the lower lake maybe three days ago. Out of my range now and I'm sorry that I missed it. They came to the cabin and we chewed the fat till 9:30. The pilot had been around a good bit and had many experiences with bears. He had first hand information on a few of the maulings I had heard about. It started to rain and it was time they were going. They had burned a barrel of gas today.

June 19 – Overcast, Calm, Raining & 42°.

After writing last evening I was curious as to what the caribou counters had seen during the day. I would just take a paddle up there and find out. Better still I would put the little gas kicker on and make it in 25 min. It was raining lightly as I shoved off from my beach. The little kicker⁵² sang a merry tune as I went gliding over the smooth water. Halfway and here came the Super Cub down and climbing. No indication that he saw me and went on down the lake. On the beach at the upper end that good looking Jet Ranger with a KAS⁵³ on the side. Kenai Air Service. That was Lofstedt's rig. Bob the caribou biologist was there and finishing supper. He offered me fried chicken and corn on the cob. They had more than before they started he said. Two others there. Don, another biologist and

⁴⁸ Fred Cowgill (1900?-1965), a Homer based guide who built a hunting cabin about 250 yards south of the Proenneke Site in the early 1960s. RLP's Cowgill Benches are a series of terraces running SE of the Cowgill cabin near Hope Creek.

⁴⁹ Lyman Nichols, a sheep hunter and pilot, perhaps from the Kenai.

⁵⁰ Telaquana Lake, a large lake about 25 miles north of Twin Lakes in the Kuskokwim watershed; Dilah Vena is the Dena'ina word for "salmon swim in lake."

⁵¹ Snipe Lake, a large non-glacial lake about 6 miles west of Twin Lakes; K'adala Vena is the Dena'ina word for "birds fly out lake."

⁵² The term "kicker" is an Alaska regional variant for a small outboard boat engine.

⁵³ Kenai Air Service (KAS) was owned by Vernon "Bud" Loftstedt and flew both fixed wing aircraft and helicopters.



Bud, Bud Lofstedt's son [Vernon Jr.] who was the pilot of the chopper. Mustache, long hair and beard. I wouldn't have recognized him as the kid who was acting as assist. guide for his dad back in the sixties. "Boy, if you saw what we saw today," Bob said. He would say that to a ground bound poor boy. Bears, wolves and many caribou. A sow with twins just over the ridge from Arlen's cabin. A big boar and sow. Two bears and three wolves in an argument over a kill and the herd - a mile farther away and still going. Maybe 5000 in the herd.⁵⁴ Sure wished he could take me along but it was against regulations (which I was certain of and rightly so). The bear-wolf hassle they had ended with the chopper with everybody running for the hills. The location up the valley from Pear Lake towards the Kijik and he doubted if I could see them if they came back as it was in brush country.

No money would be made counting caribou today. Of what value is counting 5,000 or 10,000 caribou and spending many thousands of dollars doing it. The only answer - man has to satisfy himself that he knows what he doesn't know. Like Henry David⁵⁵ said "All he really knows is that the wind blows."

June 20 - Overcast, Calm & 40°.

I had taken the shovel along to rebury a can dump which the bears had opened and scattered cans about. The camp that Hank Rust's⁵⁶ hunters had used on the beach towards a gravel bank. What I needed was a can smasher. A half bushel of beer cans take a big hole. A 75 lb. rock on a beach solved that problem. All the cans in and I lifted the rock as high as my head and brought it down with force. A half dozen blows and there was room for much gravel on top. The weather was really looking good over the upper lake. Clouds along the mts. and the lake very blue. I beached at the end of the gravel banks and hiked to the top of the high bank along Beech Creek. A good view of some moose country and also a good shot up the lake. Not enough breeze and the insects a pest. The white socks are beginning to work now. I headed up and put in at Low Pass⁵⁷ beach to check on the sandpiper nest. No bird there but the sun was warm. It is hard to realize that those four large eggs belong to that little sandpiper.

June 21 - Overcast, Calm & 41°.

Clouds were low again and there was some question in my mind if it was the wise thing to do. I had planned to celebrate the longest day and the shortest night by taking an over night trip to the low country.

I was up at four and by five it was fairing up. I shoved off at six after leaving a note

⁵⁴ The Mulchatna caribou herd spends part of the year in the Twin Lakes area.

⁵⁵ Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), an American philosopher, father of modern environmental movement, whose book, *Walden* inspired RLP to move to Twin Lakes.

⁵⁶ Hank Rust (1920-2005), an Anchorage based bush pilot-guide who owned a lodge on Lake Clark and Rust's Flying Service.

⁵⁷ RLP's Low Pass, a pass through the mountains connecting upper Twin Lakes with the Kijik River Valley.

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on the table that I would be gone for a day or two. By the time I reached Emerson Creek it was a picture taking day. I ran the stream⁵⁸ into the lower lake and water even more blue than the upper lake. Down the middle and around Gatano's point. 10 o'clock when I beached at Arlen's cabin. My gear squared away I took a break of two hrs. before heading on down to Trail Butte. Instead of traveling the flats with its countless ridges and holes I climbed to the caribou trails along the lower slope of the Volcanic Mts.⁵⁹ Trails well worn by recent traffic of many caribou. It must have been done by the great number of caribou that Jerre Wills wrote about.

Past the end of the mts. and onto the gravel buttes and I came onto the trails north to south made by the recent passage of the big herd. Many trails well worn but still the thousands of hooves didn't cut through the moss to the bare ground.

I heard a plane and thought, Babe would pick today to come. Two Super Cubs one on floats, the other on wheels came from the bend of the Kijik and headed up the lake. Now and again I stopped to glass the country but saw no caribou. Finally up Trail Butte with its 360° view. I had brought the scope along today. I wanted to look in the direction the big herd had gone. Since the boys left I had been thinking I should have taken off the next morning. Maybe I couldn't have found them in a day but I could have in a day and a half. The sun was on those hills and ridges but no sign of caribou. It was just too far to go not knowing exactly where they were. Not a caribou in that direction. I swung the scope towards the Chilikadrotna and right away I saw something that made my heart beat faster. A mile and a half away a good bunch of caribou on one of two ice covered areas on the whole low country flats. Springs had fed water during the cold of winter. Ice had built up a few feet thick. Now two pond like areas white with ice. The caribou bunched close and I could see many antlers of bulls. Right away I dropped down from my look out and headed that way. As I broke over a low rise I found that the caribou had left the ice and were feeding in a big spread toward the river. I moved in and set up on a small brushy knoll at the lower end of the ice patch. Insects were working on the bunch and there was much fighting and running about. When they turned my way I knew they were coming back. Here they came head on up a strip of ice and passed not over fifty yards away under the brow of the little knoll. This was a perfect set up. Some bedding down and others standing heads low to the ice. Sooner than I expected they fed out the other way towards Trail Butte. Now was my chance to climb a large knoll between the two ice patches. I made it and was set up on the sunny side not even a good hundred yards from their resting spot in case they came back. Not gone long and they turned back again and right to the bed ground. I was really doing good. They could hear the camera but caribou get used to it and ignore it. One or two watched me and would have left if the others hadn't ignored it. Finally they went back to fighting insects. I was doing some real business now. The sun was in and out and I waited for the sun. Finally it was time to feed again and they started to leave the ice and headed around the large knoll and down country. This was fine as they would soon be out of sight and I could head for camp. Nearly 200 ft. of film exposed and never a better opportunity on caribou bulls. I loaded up and dropped down

⁵⁸ "Stream," also known as the "connecting stream" refers to the 1/3-mile long river that connects upper and lower Twin Lakes.

⁵⁹ RLP's Volcanic Mountains, are mountains that lie to the south of lower Twin Lakes.



over the point of the knoll. In the brush near the base and I came onto sign of old dens and then the den itself. Wolf tracks at the entrance and made since the last rain. The den itself had a fresh used look and I got close to see into the tunnel. Big tracks in the soft dirt. I had stumbled onto a wolf den. No sign of pups. An old caribou bone laying close. I didn't stay long and hoped I hadn't caused any damage a little time wouldn't heal. Out across the ice and up country - I had five miles to go and it would be near sundown before I reached Arlen's cabin. I had gone about a quarter mile and thinking of my find. Those tracks in the tunnel - were they going in or out? The wolf would have to slide in on its belly and I could easily tell. I parked my gear and hurried back. Two rows of tracks close together left and right going down and back and then up grade out of sight. No chance of tracks being made on top of them coming out. That wolf had to be in the den. I listened close to the opening but could hear no sound from within. If there had been pups I felt sure I could hear them. I hurried away and watched for good blinds along the way where I could watch the den from.

I had gone only a short distance when there on my right and about a hundred yards stood two young bull moose. Twins with little spike antlers. Really nice looking yearlings of the same size. No film in the camera. I had used it all on the caribou. They stood and looked until I moved to go and then hurried towards a patch of timber. Farther on I walked up onto a ptarmigan hen in full summer plumage and she would have made a good subject. A mile and a half and I saw a caribou cow coming down from the gravel buttes. The sun was getting low and she was a pretty sight in the big wide open. She had seen me from a distance and was coming thinking I was another caribou. I stopped behind a thick dead spruce. She trotted and stopped to look and trotted again. She had lost me. She had the right idea. She knew where I should be and when she got close began to smell the ground. No luck and she searched farther until she got down wind. She stood and looked for a minute and then got alarmed and took off at a fast trot. I headed for my trail along the slope of the mt. I looked back often to see if that knoll with the two ice patches was visible. From on the mt. trail using the scope I could check the den from a great distance. The sun had nearly set when I reached the cabin. I reloaded the camera and climbed the slope behind the cabin to watch the sunset on that longest day. It was a beautiful ending for a good day. The sky partly cloudy and it was warm with a light breeze coming up country. Near eleven o'clock when I turned in.

June 22 - Overcast, Warm & Calm.

I was surprised to find a yellow mail pouch on my table and my outgoing mail still there. About that time I heard foot steps and here came a young guy wearing a red shirt. Jim Shake⁶⁰ was his name he said. He had bought Spike's cabin. Babe had flown him in. Two loads and another to come yet today if the weather wasn't too bad.

⁶⁰ Jim Shake, a young visitor from Washington State who apparently briefly owned Spike and Hope's cabins. He left RLP a big kettle and a splitting maul.



I was glad to meet the guy and anxious to learn what his impression of the wilderness was after spending his first night alone there. It wasn't long until he said he had set in the cabin and was bored with that. He didn't know what he wanted to do. He had made out a list of places he wanted to see and things he wanted to do in Alaska. He would stay here a week and then travel to [Mount] McKinley [National] Park. Then go down the Inside Passage and then come back and hunt a bit. Fly the meat to Anch. - buy a freezer and put it in the back of his pickup. Load in the meat and drive home. He soon gave up that idea and would just look and take pictures. He liked pictures but would rather cut them out of magazines and mount them in loose leaf folders than take them. We spent the afternoon visiting, talking of his country and the orchard business. They had sold out and now he was taking a vacation before going back to work for big farmers raising sugar beets and corn.

June 23 - Overcast, Calm & 46°.

I was up at 4:30 to get my writing caught up and it took longer than I expected. I hadn't built my breakfast fire when I heard a quiet airplane coming and knew it was the old T craft. He landed up at the point and I got busy closing my outgoing letters. Soon he taxied down and tailed it into the beach. He had brought me 50 lbs. of flour, many onions, a gal. of vinegar, and many smoked salmon plus a gallon can of peanut butter. He was a happy guy and filled me in on all the news about the Lake Clark country. Bee was about ready to put the roof on his house. Glen getting married.⁶¹ Floyd Denison⁶² complaining because he can't buy food stamps with a check. That rascal is getting so fat living on food stamps he can't bend over. Mary⁶³ would like to go to Hawaii next winter for a little vacation but he doesn't care to go. He hasn't seen all of Alaska yet. Lots of moose he said. He sees lots of cows with twin calves.

Jim came down and they discussed this going out business. Jim said the 28th but then changed it to the 27th in case the weather might foul up. Here Babe had flown in three loads of his gear and grub \$83.00 worth and he isn't staying a week and only plans to take out what he can haul in one load. I think that one night alone here on the point got to him. He says there is so much he wants to see that he must get moving but it goes deeper than that. Well, Babe would come in the 27th then and he fired up the little old bird and flew away. It fits Twin Lakes better than any plane that ever came. I told him it surely was quiet - no fuss, no muss and he said, "Yes, and it is getting quieter all the time." Only 600 hrs. on that engine and he thinks it is getting tired.

⁶¹ Glen Alsworth, the youngest son of Babe and Mary Alsworth, pilot and college student at Lazy Mountain Bible College in Palmer. Alsworth married Patricia Elliott on July 14, 1974.

⁶² Floyd Denison (1907-1986), resident of Lake Clark since the early 1930s, he lived about two miles south of the Alsworth homestead.

⁶³ Mary Alsworth (1923-1996), born at Pilot Point, and married Babe Alsworth in 1941, post mistress, weather reporter, ran lodge for many years at Port Alsworth.

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June 26 – Clear, Calm & 38°.

Now as I headed up the lake I saw it at my beach. Who could that be and maybe they were tired of waiting and would fly away before I got there. As I got closer I could make out strange uniforms moving through the trees. Maybe it was BLM⁶⁴ in for a check up on the legality of my cabin. I had an answer ready. I am working for a branch of your outfit – the National Park Service and for Fish & Game too. When I got close I saw a slim guy with a crumpled cowboy hat and he came down to the beach. Bob Acheson formerly of Kodiak and now Ellensburg, Wash.⁶⁵ I was surprised and glad to see the guy. I had heard so much of that fine cattle ranch of his. The other man Bob Barnett, a shrimp boat owner from Homer and pilot of the [Cessna] 180.⁶⁶ Barnett has a cabin on Lake Clark above Babe's bay⁶⁷ ten miles or more.

From the looks of things they intended to stay the night at least. Sleeping bags, a box of grub and something else, a chicken halibut and some herring, salmon eggs and a bag of frozen shrimp all caught on the last trip out with the boat. They had intended to stay in Hope's cabin but I asked them to stay here. Get the Army cot from Spike's cabin and we would be in good shape. A good visit. Talk over old times on Kodiak of those still there and those gone. Bob Acheson had a freighting business out of Flat, Alaska (about 200 miles west of here) years ago and from there to Kodiak and the Donnley and Acheson store there.

I went to the point for greens even though they had lettuce and celery along. Feed them a good salad. We invited Jim down...We had shrimp with melted butter, mashed spuds and fireweed salad which was a big hit. I was lucky and got a good scold on my dressing. The dishes done and more chewing the fat. Bob's son and wife were doing a fine job running the ranch and Bob was free to visit the north country again. He would buy one and maybe both of Spike's cabins. It depended on Jim's deal with Spike. It was a pleasant evening with the insects a bit on the active side. We turned in, Acheson on the lower bunk and Barnett on the cot. Not a sound but Hope Creek during the night. In the morning sourdough hotcakes. Bob Acheson told of one woman after reading my book – promptly cooked a kettle of beans and got some sourdough going.

June 27 – Clear, Calm & 38°.

Babe and Acheson really hit it off except I sorta shuddered at all the cuss words Bob was using. They both knew a lot of the old timers, pilots, prospectors and fishermen. Bob said

⁶⁴ Bureau of Land Management (BLM), part of the Department of Interior was the Federal land managing agency that oversaw the Twin Lakes area before late 1978 when the National Park Service assumed management.

⁶⁵ Bob Acheson (1908-1993) born at the mining camp of Ester to an Alaska pioneering family, Kodiak businessman, who was acquainted with RLP on Kodiak Island.

⁶⁶ Bob Barnett (1915-) Anchorage pioneer and businessman who owned a cabin near Portage Creek on Lake Clark.

⁶⁷ RLP's Babe's bay, is Hardenburg Bay on Lake Clark at Port Alsworth, named for prospector H. von Hardenburg, circa 1906. The Barnett cabin was located near Portage Creek approximately 14 miles NE of Hardenburg Bay.

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he would like to visit with Babe again and refresh his memory of the good old days.

Babe wondered if he could get his load off of the water as it was glassy smooth. Clouds were showing down country and he had said Lake Clark had ground fog this morning. He ran and ran and finally eased that one float out of the water. He had it made and was soon climbing along the Volcanic Mts.

We came down and they got underway. A last look around to see that nothing stayed behind. An invitation to Ellensburg and the ranch. If you get as close as Seattle I'll come get you Bob Acheson had said. And an invitation to Homer and a cruise on the shrimper too.

Babe had brought me a few oranges and bananas along with my mail. Another 50 rolls of film from the Park Service. I doubt if they have received a report or viewed that which I sent in. We had cut out a section of moss and buried the halibut, herring and eggs. The ground still frozen solid under that best of insulation. I would give a good portion of it to Babe as I couldn't make use of it all. Soon he was back and I dug it out. White with frost under the moss. Jim had said he had lots of time he would close up the cabin but I noticed the stove pipe still up and the windows not covered.

This time they got everything in and he said all that I found of his in the cabin I could have. He thanked me for the good tour and told me his latest plan – get a good camera and photograph ducks. They made a run down the lake but couldn't get off. Back the other way – there was some ripples above the point from a very light breeze. Off and flying. Once more I was king of Twin Lakes. I had a feeling that Twin Lakes as it was is a thing of the past. People coming and thinking gee! this is great. What a wonderful place, not realizing what a handicap it puts on a guy who prefers to feel there is no one closer than Lake Clark.

July 28 – Partial H. Overcast, Calm & 44°.

Up before the sun this morning and it is rising very close to the string of the mts. along the south side of the lake. Last night's overcast down country backed off and this morning the partial thin overcast was up country. This looked like a going day coming up and it would have to be Sunday and letter writing day. Babe just might bring the little boys in but I couldn't depend on him to do it. Operate as if he didn't intend to come and let the writing wait for a rainy day. Today I would visit Farmer's⁶⁸ ram mt. to see if rams did come back to it. It would be a climbing deal. Go to the second canyon and up it to the highest part of the skyline. That would be a good test for those football shoes. I put in my leather arch support insoles and wore a light and heavy pair of socks. Laced them good and snug and would tighten them up again on the mt. Take the old Linhof tripod and Bolex head as this would be mostly scenic shots. I was ready by seven with a note on the table with my

⁶⁸ Marshall Farmer (1920-2001) guide-pilot from Anchorage who purchased the Cowgill cabin in 1959. RLP referred to the cabin as the "Cowgill" or "Farmer" cabin. RLP's Farmer landing, Farmer point, and Farmer trail are all located near the cabin. RLP's Farmer's ram mt. was probably off upper Hope Creek.



outgoing mail "Be back by five" and I baited the trot line⁶⁹ as I passed. Across the creek and up the trail on the Cowgill benches. Those shoes felt good and very light. A new caribou track on the trail up the creek. At the second canyon I climbed to my look out before going on up the canyon. Something on the bench at the head of the creek. Blond & black – it could only be a bear. Too tall to be laying down and it didn't move. I watched for a few minutes and thought I saw a variation in color and size. It had to be a bear but a strange acting one. I dropped down and crossed the second canyon creek and headed up Hope Creek. Climbed well up the slope and went a half mile. I glassed again. A rock with a bright face catching the morning sun. I turned back and up around the point into the second canyon. Good going all the way up into the big basin and then it is loose rock on all sides and lots of it. I picked a spot with lots of coarse rock and snailed my way up the steep slope. The sun really bearing down and no air moving. Up to a big outcrop and the angle not so steep from there. Those shoes were doing a good job. Holding perfect where there was anything to get ahold of. I broke out on a ridge and beyond it a very big bowl leading up to the skyline. A big snow field against the upper slope. Two cows and two calves standing on the snow high up. Noses to the cool snow which is protection from the insects. I headed up the ridge which was good going. Any time you find black rock (black lichen covered) it is stabilized and good footing. Either the breeze up there gave me away or the cows saw me and became alarmed. When I saw them at the bottom of the snow field I thought I had found more. Again they moved and circled below to where I had come up onto the ridge. Cows smelling the ground and trotting around before they took off down over the edge towards Hope Creek. I climbed out on top following a sheep trail with tracks made since the last rain. Droppings were dry so it had been a few days since they were there.

Redoubt⁷⁰ and Iliamna really stood out and miles closer than I had seen them from the head of Camp Creek.⁷¹ I could see a lot of Kijik River country and a good view of Lachbuna Lake.⁷² No sheep did I see in any direction. I followed the ridge a quarter mile to my left (up country) to see over a hog back running down to the Kijik low country. Tracks in loose stuff far down and finally I spotted a bull caribou standing on a snow patch in a deep wash. Many hundreds of feet down and loose rock all the way. Only an average bull anyway. I back tracked and would follow the ridge to the peak if possible and it looked doubtful. Sheep had used the ridge and here and there a sheep trail past a high point of rock. I dropped a few hundred feet and would have to gain it back twice over to reach the peak. Beyond the peak was Farmer's sheep country. Outside of one steep pitch of loose stuff I had no trouble. Always a way no matter how rough it looked. I pulled up to the peak which is pretty much a pinnacle of fairly solid rock. Very small on top but a nice little hollow lined with a mat of very fine green grass. I suppose that over the hundreds of years that sheep have bedded there – they fertilized the area and packed grass seed there

⁶⁹ RLP's trot line refers to a set fishing line of baited hooks anchored from the land or a float, also known as a trout line.

⁷⁰ Mount Redoubt, a 10,197 ft. semi-active volcano about 40 miles east of Twin Lakes.

⁷¹ RLP's Camp Creek is a small tributary of Emerson Creek.

⁷² Lachbuna Lake, a large glacial lake that the Kijik River flows into about 12 miles SW of Twin Lakes; the Dena'ina word is L'alit Vena, "deadfall collapses lake."

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too. From that peak I think is the most beautiful view I have seen of Twin Lakes country. Looking up into the head of the Kijik River valley – big and open – glaciers at the head. Beyond that the mts. and glaciers to Lake Clark Pass and beyond to the base of Redoubt and that huge mt. in the background. Sometime on a nice day I must make the climb again with the Exakta. Be there by one P.M. for at that time the sun is 90° to the view (for a pola screen shot). From the peak I could see all of the Kijik from the head waters to the bend below Lachbuna and only a few miles from its mouth at Lake Clark. One fast river, that Kijik. White water all the way as far as I could see. Still I failed to see sheep. A few tracks and from the size they had to be ewes and lambs. Beyond my peak to the west – a very large and rugged mt. and rams on there would be pretty safe. I shot a roll of film from on top and stayed till 2:30 before heading down and I hated to think about all that loose rock going down. I picked the first low pass with fine stuff leading down to the big tailing piles in the basin and dropped over the edge. I made real good time plowing down the slope in the fine stuff and was soon on a gentle slope of stabilized loose rock. From there onto a steep snow field and those deep lugs on my shoes did a fine job of holding. Soon I was onto the grass and dropping fast. One hr. from the peak to Hope Creek and I could make it to my cabin in one hr. from there. A cold drink of water and half of my chocolate square before I headed on down.

Getting a good start and I saw a young bull caribou trotting down the creek bottom. He had seen me and was on the go. He left the creek and came out on my side. The breeze was down so he had my scent and still he didn't get alarmed. He might be good for a few feet of film and I put my rig together. He fed and came my way. I exposed some film and moved ahead. He came on and I the same. Down wind at a hundred feet and still he showed no sign of alarm. He came within fifty feet and it wasn't until insects gave him a bad time that he headed for the brush of the creek bottom. Never have I seen such behavior by a caribou. I had lost a half hr. but would still make it by five. Past first canyon and Pup Tent canyon and over the trail to the Cowgill benches. No plane at my beach. I sat down to look for Jerg's [Jürgen Kroener]⁷³ rams. From the peak I had seen two of them in a tough to get to spot. Now I saw all four. Three he would never find and the fourth near the top and he could shoot him from the ridge. Down the trail and my trot line stretched out. It pulled heavy and I suspected two fish. Sure enough two lake trouts – one a big one.

I had work to do. Get the biscuits going, get cleaned up and washing done, dress the fish, cook the rhubarb, gather greens. The big lake trout measured 19 inches exactly – the other about 15".

Now at 9:10, everything done and time to turn in. I have a feeling it will seem like a very short night. Overcast took over after I arrived, a light breeze down the lake and 64°.

The shoes did a very good job on a much tougher than average hike. I feel that

⁷³ Jergen or [Jürgen] Kroener, a German backpacker who spent three months in the Twin Lakes country.

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their life would be short but for a one hunt deal like an average sheep hunter – they would be fine. To me it was like having wings on my feet – like losing my ball and chain. I would like to race Jerg in his \$60.00 German mt. shoes to the top of Allen Mt.

July 30 – Overcast, Calm & 52°.

A plane came up the lake following the shoreline. It turned at the upper end and went down. A red & yellow Goose – not Fish and Game. Again it came up past Carrithers' point and then turned and landed. I suspect it was the Park Service. I headed down, full paddle. About halfway when it took off and came to meet me. Landed along side and I paddled close. The pilot, a little guy with mutton chop whiskers. He looked a little familiar. He says, I guess you don't know me. Jack Johnson of Kodiak. (One of twins Jerry & Jack. Their dad had drowned off shore in a little boat while coming from elk hunting on Afognak Island.)

We tried to get enough of the canoe in the Goose so the stern would clear the water and he would taxi down, but it wouldn't work so we would tow it along side. There is a Park Service man at your place he said. On the way down I wondered what the verdict would be. Was I doing ok at this picture taking racket. Near my beach he shut her off till I got clear and then taxied in. The man was Keith Trexler⁷⁴ (project leader). I had seen him at Anch. in the office there. He greeted me with a big smile. Four other young guys of various descriptions were on the beach. Then came the sad news. Your films were the best bar none, of any taken for us. With others, we figure about 10% useable but with yours we can use 90% or even more. That sounded pretty good to me but I figured maybe my cheap rate of pay had something to do with it. He gave me a memo from the man who reviewed them and he listed the scenes (most important) and their quality for each of the 34 rolls. He wrote – the overall evaluation is that the film footage is of high professional quality. In sum, this footage represents some of the very best we have gathered during our entire film effort. I therefore recommend that Dick Proenneke be engaged for a continuance of filming at Lake Clark Twin Lakes region for the remainder of the summer and full season. End of quote.

That was pretty good but I should have done better and would try to eliminate those few overexposed and underexposed takes. And as far the guy who wrote that stuff – flattery will get him no where. In front of the cabin lay a duffle bag full to bursting. A gallon can of appliance fuel set along side. A big cardboard tag on each. Could they leave it here for three Sierra Club hikers who were hiking from Lake Clark to Telaquana Lake. They were due to pass here about mid Sept. From the names on the tags it sounds like two

⁷⁴ Keith Trexler (1932-1975), NPS interpretive planner with the Alaska Task Force. Died in a plane crash with NPS employees Rhonda Barber, Carol Byler, Janice Cooper, Dawn Finney, Jane Matlock, and Mickett (Clara) Veara on September 12, 1975. The NPS employees had spent all summer typing the field notes of the Alaska Task Force members and were to be treated with a day out of the office to visit RLP at "One Man's Wilderness."

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girls and a boy. Bea Van Horne, Candy Downing & Walter Ward.⁷⁵ Experienced hikers so they could manage. The boys had a case of "C" rations out of the goose and they had their lunch at noon their time, eleven mine, and when that was over they prepared to take off. They wanted to see Lake Clark and Lake Clark Pass yet and get back early.

July 31 - Partly Cloudy, Calm & 40°.

I was awake at four and saw the sky was nearly clear, the lake calm. Today would be the day to go to the lower end and over the high ridge towards Turquoise Lake. I rushed around getting breakfast and my gear laid out. I noticed that the dark cloud bank way down was going the other way. That full moon was doing its job well.

I was loaded and shoved off about 6:15. I would paddle the eight and a half miles with the little kicker along for the ride. It is a pleasure to paddle early in the morning with the lake calm and the temp. 40°.

I had spent two days on the beach waiting for the lake to calm enough that I could risk a crossing to Arlen's cabin. Everything that would stay behind was under the bottom up canoe. My load consisting of camera and tripod (Linhof & Bolex head) 500 ft. of film. A few rations and my heavy pistol in case I had the opportunity to get close to a grizzly. Actually it is the brownie but Jerg refers to them as grizzly and so does the Park Service. 9:30 when I left the canoe and headed directly for that high open ridge. It looks like a long way and nearly all up hill. Across the upper boarder of the gravel knolls and a broad open brush covered flat and then a strip of cottonwood and spruce at the base of the first pitch. The sun was bearing down and that was no good. A few clouds were forming and as I climbed they multiplied. Good climbing, solid footing with only a few narrow brushy draws to cross. A couple pretty little ponds and enough steams for good water in route. Two hrs. and I was standing on the ridge. To the right the ridge leads up to the peak and to the left it spreads out into a big table land - little or no brush and as green as a golf course. Straight ahead it goes down at a rapid rate. A deep canyon coming out of the mt. and making a sharp bend to the right and into a valley that runs perhaps five miles into the mts. On the far side of the deep canyon sheep trails coming to the point of the ridge separating the canyon from the valley. As I continued down over the far side more trails and finally I could see the bottom and the stream. The trails all converged on the point not far from the steam. Suddenly it struck me. I was looking at the mineral lick that Lyman Nichols had told me about a few years ago. You should spend some time there, he said. There is bound to be lots of game come there to eat dirt. At least sixteen trails I counted coming down from the top and in from each side. With my glasses I could see hollows (where over the years) sheep had made eating this formation for mineral that they need. No vegetation on the mineral point. It appears like a huge mud bank, blue in color.

⁷⁵ Beatrice Van Horne, Candice Downing, and Walter Ward were undergraduate students from the University of California, Santa Cruz in the Environmental Studies Program who studied the feasibility of national park status in the Lake Clark area. They were funded by a Sierra Club Foundation grant, a grant from their university, and received logistical and village liaison support from the NPS Alaska Task Force.



A perfect spot to camp below the lick near the stream. Small brush patches for a blind. The afternoon sun would be just right.

I detoured a few hundred yds. to the left where I could get down with grass nearly all the way. On the stream I saw chunks of this blue very crumbly rock. If Lyman would have a sample analyzed I would pack some out. He will be happy to learn that I found it. Down the stream a short ways and into the big valley that I had seen from high on the ridge up Camp Creek. I headed up the valley expecting to see many sheep up under the rock ledges on the right hand side. A good start up the valley and now those clouds were grey and heavy. Down the valley scattered clouds and sunshine. No sheep and I kept going expecting to find them. Grass from the valley floor up to the first rock ledges. Sheep sign but nothing real fresh. Along the trail an old rams horn. Very massive and full curl, badly broomed and a real tight curl. That old guy had gone his twelve winters and more. Many parky squirrels - families of them. The old one standing motionless while the young ones did the complaining. Finally some sheep. Four ewes and four lambs high up in the rocks. While I traveled two of each broke away and headed up country and I suspected that was where the big bunch was. Up the valley which finally roughens and eventually becomes loose rock and tailing piles of glaciers past. Far up I could see many large streams pouring out of the face of a tailing pile. Maybe two and one half miles I traveled before coming to a side canyon on the right. The big bunch could be in there. It involved some climbing to get to a view point and it started to sprinkle. In this canyon and high up at the head, [a] few ewes and lambs on a ledge that looked pretty impossible to get to by sheep or man. Now I had seen it all. The sheep must be on the other side of the mt. reached by going up Camp Creek. The rain increased and there wasn't an over hanging rock in sight. Two o'clock when I headed down and was soon dripping. I picked up the rams horn as I passed and carried it to the mineral lick. One hr. it had taken me to come that far. Now the climb to the ridge again and I had only a good start when a young bull caribou showed up on the skyline headed down to the lick area. It saw me and that ended that. Much running about and it finally took off. Twenty minutes for the climb out and I could see down on the Chilikadrotna country which was grey with rain. It was clearing up country. Now I had it made - down hill all the way to the spruce timber and brush which was due to be wet. The rain stopped and I sat glassing the many ponds below in hopes of seeing a moose feeding in the water. It was 6:30 when I reached the canoe. The sun still high and the rain past. I shouldered my gear and headed down the river. I would go about a mile below Frank's [Bell] cabin. Many wide open gravel bars and a chance to see a moose or caribou. And too I wanted to see if any king salmon lay along the cut banks in the eddies. I had just left the canoe when a blue and white [Cessna] 180 came from over the ridge and to the head of the river. He banked sharply to get a look at me and then on up a mile where he turned and landed coming back towards me. I stopped and waited. He turned into the beach well out of the bay for it is shallow with big rocks. I went on and climbed to the brass plate rock. The plane had let out three on the beach and took off for Lake Clark. Fishermen for the greyling hot spot. Well, I would make the first track on the river bank anyway. I went on down and saw a recently made caribou track and a

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fair moose track. No kings along the banks. I went past the tumble down trappers cabin and stood looking at that nice Alaska Magazine. picture in real life. A little tree squirrel crossed just in front of me packing a mushroom nearly as big as he was. The light failing and I headed back. I loaded the canoe and headed for Arlen's cabin. The intruders wading around in the brush behind the beach. A radio was going full blast. I had gone halfway when here came the [Cessna] 180 back and this time let off more people. Five in all and some were children. Arlen's cabin, just as I had left it last time.

I fried some lake trout I had brought and warmed up some beans. Dishes done and I turned in. It had been a pretty good day. To find that lick was more important than seeing a band of sheep. The sky partly cloudy, calm and warm, 50° perhaps.

August 2 - Partly Cloudy, Calm & 40°.

The weather is holding fair and it was a beautiful sunrise. Hotcakes for breakfast and I was just finishing dishes when I heard a plane and it sounded like the easy running T- Craft. Sure enough - a pass overhead - a turn down country and he came in to the beach. I could see heads of two little boys over the bottom of the window. At last Leon & Sig had arrived at Twin Lakes. Babe turned her around and tied the tail to a tree. Out came the little guys with their sleeping bags. Babe unloaded their luggage and a big plastic garbage bag, four doz. eggs, and a slab of bacon. "Feed them lots of smoke fish," he said. I went about getting my outgoing mail ready while we visited and the boys had a look around. The birds came and the fun started. They liked those camp robbers and the camp robbers knew an easy touch and made the most of it. When would the squirrel come and could we climb a mt. today. Would we see some sheep. That was high on the list - they had never seen sheep.

Some sad news. My brother-in-law Melvin had died of a bad heart attack. Eligible to retire from the telephone company this month of Aug. but he hadn't planned to retire.

When are we going to climb a mt. came from the little guys. The lake was good we would paddle the lake. Oh good! I fitted each with a life jacket. Leon would paddle out and Sig back. We headed for Glacier Creek point. Check the game trail and look at the bear tree with tooth marks higher than I could reach. The morning was warm and they wore their parkas. Going up through the brush and picking berries here and there. Sig got behind and when he came in sight - no coat. Where had he left it. Oh! in the brush back there. Well, he would have to find it on the way back. The trail crossing the creek had been used. A moose plowing down the steep trail in loose dirt had all but erased a bear track. A good little patch of berries picked and devoured and we headed down. Sig did pretty good but stopped short in the search for his coat. He scouted around through the brush and finally, oh, here it is.

We launched and headed across for first point and the cave high up the grassy



slope in the big rock. Sig the best paddler of the two. More serious and not so much playing around. The climb started and only a hundred feet up when there was an awful racket. I looked down to see them tumbling down the mt. Leon just missing a protruding rock. Such squalling I have never heard by both of them. And then I noticed bees swarming in the moss just below me. Yellow jackets and both had been stung a few times about the face and neck. The climb was off – they didn't want to go farther but I talked them into it. What's a couple stings anyway? Only welts formed and after a little delay to lick their wounds they made a big detour and we climbed keeping a sharp look out for yellow jackets. The cave I had only been to it once and wondered what had used it since. Ptarmigan had roosted there before. This time it had been the porcupine. We explored the big hole in the rock and enjoyed the view. Glassed the mts. for sheep but saw none. On the way down we circled the bees nest and cautiously came up from below. Yellow jackets covered a rock in the moss, crawling about. When they began to stir it was get out of here and down to the beach.

I had cooked a fresh kettle of beans early. It was noon Port Alsworth time. When do we eat. No eating till 12 Twin Lakes time but they had to taste those beans. I was busy on the beach and could hear that lid carefully being replaced every few minutes. Much tasting going on in the cabin.

In the afternoon we would pick blueberries to have some topping for hotcakes. Eager little guys when it comes to picking berries. Leon could keep up with me and not as many green ones. Sig slower and had to eat them from his pail. No eating from the bucket according to Leon. From the brush not too bad but not out of the bucket. A big pile of fresh bear dropping on the creek trail so someone else was picking too. All afternoon we scouted and picked towards the lake. A great thirst for water and they thought we would never get there. Leon spilled his in the moss and had to pick them up. Bet he could get them all but decided he could pick new ones faster when the clean up got slow. Nearly two gallons total when we worked our way out of blueberry country. A big sorting session on the beach and the green ones tossed in to the lake where a few good rises appeared. A little four incher came in close to shore. Much interest in fish by those boys.

Time for supper and it would be spuds, lake trout and beans, blueberries for dessert. Just getting things going when here came Jerg [Jürgen Kroener] paddling down along the beach. We would have a full crew for supper.

Jerg had gone way back the day I saw him last and stayed over night. 14 hrs. and fording streams. Climbing with a good load and the marmot he hoped to find didn't show. Last night he had a time at his tent. During the night he heard and felt something try to get under his sleeping bag. He found it to be a porcupine and it wouldn't go away until he threw something over it. He had shot pictures of the full moon over the mt. and thinks he might have some nice shots. We had supper and there were no leftovers. As usual Jerg refused no second helpings or to clean up anything left over. I am even now more thin than on the Yukon trip, he said.

Sig dried dishes and Leon casting in the lake for trout. The trot line was baited

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and out. Jerg gave me a letter to mail to his mother, next plane. It was 9:30 when he boarded his little craft and with a "see you" paddled up the lake.

The boys tucked in head to foot in the lower bunk. We called it a day.

It was clearing up country, calm & 46°. The full moon was holding fair weather.

August 5 - Clear, Calm & 40°.

Sig didn't want to paddle across even though it was his turn. "I always have to paddle coming back when I am tired." Ok, Leon would paddle. We beached at the mouth of Falls Creek and left the canoe bottom up on the beach. Sig was guide going up the trail. A drink at the game trail crossing and that would be the last till we got on top the big rock face and into the canyon. A few wild currants and blueberries along the trail and that Leon has an eye for berries. The high waterfall is only a good shower bath now and if it was only warm they would like that. The smooth rock crossing on the rock face over it or around the bottom? Go over it cause it was shorter. No, they wasn't scared - so with Sig in the lead and me telling him where to place his feet we inched up across it. Leon got stuck with the wrong foot first and I retrieved him to the grass on the top end. On up and into the canyon for more drinks and the final climb to skyline. Leon and I had to wait at the forks of the canyon while Sig stopped to get first chance at the packet of toilet paper. On up the trail and Leon comes up with a little blue flower. He had never seen one like it. A forget-me-not - our State flower. He wanted a whole plant to take to grandma. On the way back we would dig one. On the skyline and over to Emerson Creek side of the big pasture. We could see a few sheep high up on the skyline or near it on Ram Mt.⁷⁶ across the creek. How long would it take to climb up there? Too long! I set up the scope and we counted five head. Now, we would make that long climb to look out peak. I was packing the gear in my camera pack bag and said, "You guys start up, I will catch up with you." "Are you sure you can?," came from Leon. "I think so." He didn't go but hung around till I was ready and then he took off straight for the peak. No zig zagging to make the climb easier. He would soon wear down. He was gaining fast but halfway and the steep half to go would slow him to a crawl. Sig was slower and lagged a bit. I climbed steady and would show that little 10 year old.

Down that steep grassy point of Allen Mt. they slid on their back sides and hollered and laughed and up ended a few times. By now I was beginning to wonder who would wear who out on a long haul. A stop on the rock face for a few minutes to enjoy the scenery and then down the tough stretch. Down and around the rock this time and no fun. A stop at rest rock and a second drink at the crossing. On the lake and to the canoe. The lake a little rough with quite a few white caps. Leon on the paddle and Sig to keep her level we headed out. I would rather risk a crossing in rough water with those two than with a 200 pounder on the front seat. No problem and they laughed when a seventh wave

⁷⁶ RLP's Ram Mt. was near the head of Emerson Creek.



splashed them a bit. We made it in good shape and after a sourdough sandwich they were off to Hope Creek fishing while I got the biscuits in the pan.

Soon Leon was back “Sig lost another hook” and he showed that he was proud of his record of catching all the fish and losing no lures.

“Hey! here comes that German fella” and sure enough – Jerg came paddling up along the beach. He had made a tour of the lake today. Hiked the connecting stream and fished in the lower lake. Caught two fish, “did we need a fish?” Oh no we can catch one but I knew he would like to stay for supper. “Why don’t you stay for supper and we will have the fish,” I said. “That is fine, you fix them better than I” he said. He had a big laker (19½) and a dolly about 17 inches. I dressed them out while he went with the boys to try for another to take to his camp. Mashed spuds, green beans, biscuits and trout would be our supper. Only three biscuits for four so I would have a cold sourdough hotcake. Leon always one to share insisted I have the biscuit and he the hotcake even though he had said many times he sure liked those biscuits. Supper over and as usual everything cleaned up by the chief cleaner upper – Jerg. He told me later that he had been short of money on this trip and had skimped on food. He was getting thin and weak and those 14 hr. days on the mt. were beginning to tell.

August 8 – Overcast, Calm & 44°.

Late in the afternoon a plane came down the far side for the decent going up. It was the red & black Beaver that brings the guide Pollard from Kenai.⁷⁷ He had used Jerg’s camp nearly the whole sheep season last year. Where would he set up camp this time?

August 21 – Clear, Calm & 33°.

A Super Cub with big tires came low and slow up the river. He turned a short distance up and came back and circled many times, making low landing passes at a bench across the river. Nearly but not quite and he made a couple at a river bar below and chickened out. A guide I figured and he had something spotted close by. Would he follow the no hunting the day you fly regulation. Kill it, chop the horns off and get out of here would be my guess. Finally he made a low pass over me and on down the river [Kijik] and Lachbuna Lake.

August 25 – Light Rain, Calm & 42°.

We sat on the beach and he Jergen [Kroener] told me of his travels. He had spent two

⁷⁷ Kenai, a large community on the Kenai Peninsula S of Anchorage and about 75 miles SE of Twin Lakes.



days in the Big Valley⁷⁸ behind the Volcanic Mts. A few nice pictures of caribou but no big bulls. A bunch of five or six and I wondered if it was 5 or 6 hundred. Oh no, he hadn't seen anything like that. He had camped one night on the Kijik and saw Portage⁷⁹ & Lachbuna Lakes from a distance. Packing a heavy load of gear plus sleeping bag and a little food he came home very tired. He would have to spend a day in camp resting before he could go again. "I am getting very low on food," he said. This dumb German guy didn't bring enough. "I should have brought more fat - lots of calories is what a man needs." Some people just fishing, hiking and playing around had given him some food. Also a good Mepps no. 3 lure and he had caught four fish (2 grayling & 2 dollies) in four casts at the mouth of the stream. He had never fished or eaten so many fish before. One meal he had eaten five fish. And he had made another trip to the sheep but found no rams. Fifteen head he had been close to. He had gone up Emerson [Creek] and climbed the first canyon on the left. A real good sheep trail and he had planned to go down the other side of the ridge but it dropped right down and he could only look down. One day he had been down to see the river. Too low and rocky to run it now and he wouldn't like to try it. He had seen big salmon there but didn't think he could land one with his \$15.00 spinning outfit.

I said, "Jerg, I guess I'll have to find you a caribou," and set up the scope. Right away I picked up that young bull or cow below Low Pass Creek.⁸⁰ I dressed out the lake trout and we took the fins to bait the trot line at Carrithers' point. With the scope two sheep up country from his old camp at the head of the lake. I would guess them rams but not legal. He would like to make another trip up country again.

All the while I had been figuring a way to help the poor guy on grub. He needed flour, sugar, salt, rolled oats, potatoes, anything at all. He had no money to spend and that wasn't important. In Spike's cabin I found about 4 lbs. of flour and a couple part packages of bisquick, some sugar and a box of potato buds, a small jar of honey and a little peanut butter. A part of a can of Crisco and in Hope's cabin a little rolled oats with raisins left by the Holts. He insisted on stopping with that. If he ran out he would come again. Anything he had leftover he would give to me plus some of his gear he didn't want to take back. He stowed the box full in his little boat and asked what he could give me in return. "Just send me a sample of your good pictures," I said. He would sure like to do that, but I would have to wait for he must make some money before he could get them processed.

One lake trout didn't seem like much for supper so I suggested we try Hope creek. I took my fly rod with Mepps spinner and he his spinning gear. Grayling were working. I saw four roll on the surface. One was due to get hooked shortly. He had a foul up with his reel and I hooked one. Good enough and we made ready for supper. "It is sure nice to sit down to a meal in a warm cabin" he said as I filled his GI tray with half a pan of trout. I had made a big salad from lettuce, cabbage, carrots, onion & cheese. A good big helping of beans and the old favorites - sourdoughs. We cleaned up two pans of fish plus everything else with blueberries for dessert.

⁷⁸ RLP's Big Valley is a 13-mile long valley that runs east from Snipe Lake toward the Kijik River; the Dena'ina name for the creek that runs through the valley is K' dalghektnu which means "where the caribou tear the velvet off his horns on the brush."

⁷⁹ Portage Lake, a small glacial lake about 12 miles south of Twin Lakes.

⁸⁰ RLP's Low Pass Creek, is a small stream that drains north from Low Pass basin to upper Twin Lakes.

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August 29 – Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 54°.

I just might butcher today. Cool with a good breeze. No flies or other insects. I loaded the old musket⁸¹ and tucked a couple pieces of plastic under the lashing of the GI packboard. My Knapp saw and Denver hunting knife would go too. As I crossed the creek the cows [caribou] were working down country with the wind behind them. I would take the short cut and climb to the spruce clump on the lower bench close to Cowgill Creek.⁸² I would wait there for them to come in range. I ran into a very good patch of blueberries (not too soft) at the base of the bench and marked the location in my head. I made the spruce cover in plenty time and got set. The pack boards and butchering tools standing by ready to go to work. On they came feeding a few bites here and there. The fall colors starting to show good and what beautiful footage I could get if the sun was out. A hundred yds. more or less and all five of them. Two small cows and I took them to be yearlings at the least and probably two year old. One cow with a grey cape and flank stripe. Ninety yards and closing. Make it seventy five and there would be no hole showing in the fleshed out hide. Through the neck at the base of the skull – the cut off spot. Head on shots, broadside, anything I wanted and I held my fire for that close up high in the neck shot. One made a pass at another – it whirled and trotted away. Then they spooked a bit from some imaginary object below and they trotted back and up. I had fouled up by waiting for the perfect shot. Should have taken one high forward in the ribs.

September 1 – Fog, Light Rain, Calm & 50°.

“This time I am bringing you some thing,” he [Jürgen Kroener] said as he patted the kayak deck behind him. Carry-boo! “Did you get one” – “oh no – the four hunters got one near my camp.” They had boned it out and left quite a bit. They had given him some food too. Now he was in good shape for the last two weeks.

I chunked mine and put it on to boil, well seasoned with everything on the shelf. Was there any left at the kill, “Oh, the bones.” “Any neck or ribs?” Yes, the ribs but he didn’t know about the neck. I would go back with him and see what we could scavenge.

Over under the tree lay the rib cage. Lots of good short ribs there. Why hadn’t he taken some ribs. Oh, he didn’t have a saw and his cooking pot was small. He hadn’t thought of his hatchet. This was his first carry-boo. The backstrap and tenderloin long gone. I sawed down each side of the backbone and had two sides of ribs in short order. A few good pieces of fat laying about. He was cutting what he had taken in small chunks – frying and eating it. I was running low on bacon grease, I would render some and try it in cooking. He wanted no more. I will come up and eat some of your good cooking he said as I lashed everything on the packboard.

⁸¹ RLP refers to his Springfield 30.06 rifle.

⁸² RLP’s Cowgill Creek is a small creek draining off Cowgill Mountain into upper Twin Lakes near the Proenneke Site.

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September 2 – Fog, Calm & 48°.

I was up at 5:15 to build my spud frying fire. A nice little steak of caribou in a hot salted skillet instead of bacon. How would I keep the meat from souring after all the wet. I would try hanging it by the stove to dry. Dice the fat and render it out in my big skillet. Give the meat another dose of curing salt and let it drip again. The fat rendered until it was only slightly brown. The grease poured off and the cracklings drained and let cool. Add some salt, pepper & garlic salt and put them in containers to eat dry. Jerg could go many miles farther if he packed a bag of those to chew on. Fat, that's what he needed, this was fat.

I had salvaged the tongue too. Cooked it in yesterdays broth while the fat rendered. It done and a batch of short ribs went in and bubbled as I caught up on my writing. Now it was plain to see why I hadn't shot a caribou. I will be fortunate if I can save what meat I have.

The ribs were done to perfection. The bones came free easily. As I ate a good helping I thought of Seth Wright (Jerre's friend). He and Jerre had come over for supper and I had caribou short ribs. Seth was doing pretty good and finally said "This is the best meat I have ever eaten." I think Twin Lakes country had given him a good appetite.

It seems that Twin Lakes had its quota of sunshine for the day. Clouds were building fast. At my "diggings" I found only some strange boot tracks. I wonder what he thought of the neck and two sides of caribou hanging from the perlin log. I had given them two coats of sugar cure and they were nearly dry. One more should do it and I packed them out to my work bench for the application. Get a bucket of water, saw up a length of wood and it was time for beans, spare ribs, salad and sourdoughs, cold porridge and blueberries for dessert. The sky overcast again, a light breeze up and 58°.

September 4 – Clear, Calm & 40°.

I was up at 5:15 for this was another rare day. Must take advantage of the good light of clear days. Today I would go up Emerson Creek and check on those sheep. Climb out by the waterfall and go over the skyline. That old moon (past full) was very white in the still dark sky of early morning as I got breakfast. More meat to cook and I cut off some neck meat. No sign of it starting to spoil. A half hr. later getting started but not half as far to paddle so I was at the mouth of Falls Creek in good time. Two spruce grouse flushed as I climbed the trail and I found young moose tracks the last traffic over the game trail creek crossing. Higher in the timber a good bush of very ripe rose hips which are a good source of vitamin "C." Still higher many high bush cranberries. Over the big rock face and up the canyon I was soon looking down on Emerson Creek. There would be no climbing to



look out peak today for I intended to go down and up the creek. High up on the far side I could see a string of nine sheep like a string of white beads traveling a sheep trail heading for the ridge. At another place two and still another two more. That made thirteen of the sixteen I had seen the day before. It would be slim picking up the creek today. I didn't need a lot of sheep and I could see one laying on a high grass covered outcrop of rock a couple miles up and on the right hand side. Too far to tell for sure but I would gamble that it was a ram. I would make a try for that guy so dropped down over the side and headed for the mouth of a creek coming out of the big pocket behind Allen peak. Crossing the creek I would have to climb again and then follow a sheep trail across a big rock slide to the sheeps location. It was clouding up fast and I couldn't expect much help from the sun. I crossed the creek, made the climb and followed the trail. Getting close and I didn't want to spook that guy. Slowly I worked across the top of the outcrops. He wasn't where I thought he should be and I moved down to look over the edge to see if he was feeding below. No sheep and I knew he hadn't gone far. Another bunch of outcrops farther up and I suspected that was where he had been. Suddenly there was a sheep a quarter mile farther and at first I thought it was a big ewe. It turned its head - a half curl ram. Not what I had expected but I would try for him anyway. He fed behind a rise and I moved his way. Ridges & hollows would let me get very close and I made the last ridge and eased up for a look. There he was about a hundred feet away. No sun but the breeze favorable. I had shot out the last fifteen feet of film a mile back so as to have a full roll. I backed up and planted the tripod. I was ready when he first saw me. He stood and looked for a minute or two and then back to feeding and slowly moving my way. More looking and he didn't seem to mind me winding the camera. Closer and closer, fifty feet, forty, thirty. Enough light for my 75 mm 3X lens. A full frame filler. I could even use the normal lens. I was running out of film and he had shown no sign of leaving. Just a few feet left and I whistled quietly to see what he would do. He came a few steps closer and then more. At about twenty two feet he turned and walked away. That was something that I had never experienced before. What that little guy lacked in horn he made up for with cooperation. That was pretty good and I would like to see that 100 feet of film on the screen. Back over the rise he joined four head of ewes and lambs and the five of them traveled a trail around the mt. Later there was that young guy bedded down high on a rock over looking Emerson Creek country.

Yesterday I returned to find a note on the door. It read "Dropped in to pay you a short visit but don't blame you for not sticking around on such a nice day. Everyone is extremely happy with the footage you shot - the best any of us has seen. May drop by again in a couple weeks." Signed Bob Waldrop.⁸³ He is with the Park Service and if he had only looked inside the cabin. A package on the table addressed to the Park Service and in it 1600 ft. of exposed film waiting for Babe to fly it out.

⁸³ Bob Waldrop, a seasonal NPS park planner from Anchorage.

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September 7 – Partly Cloudy, Breeze & 46°.

It was Bee and he had just flipped the prop. on the old bird in preparation for leaving. He saw me and shut her off. "I nearly missed you," he said. Terry⁸⁴ had told me "Bee is the worse. He will come but if you are not there to meet him, he will set your stuff out and fly away. Maybe you have a list to go or want to tell him or ask him something – you had better be there when he lands." I hurried to get my outgoing mail ready. Was he in a hurry? "Oh, not much I guess I was going to pick up some guys at Turquoise but it is pretty windy – they can wait." Terry and Vic are coming to Lake Clark by helicopter today and the chopper would then take him [Bee] up a side canyon in Lake Clark Pass to salvage an engine from a plane that had landed against a steep slope. He had found it – radio was still in it too. His dad had just got home with the second new "T craft" and he may get more. The price is going up a thousand soon. This one same color as the last one (red & black). This one for Bee. Took him five and one half days from the factory and was weathered in a day and a half at Ft. Nelson, [B.C.].

Bee had brought three boxes of pilot bread, a little pack outfit camp stove and a pressure cooker. Gear for the hikers headed this way, he said. "Where are they now," I asked. On the Kijik River. "Chuck Hornberger⁸⁵ took them across yesterday." Till now they had been touring Lake Clark and Lake Clark Pass.

My mail was ready and he loaded up and took off. He had brought some things I ordered. 50 lbs. of flour, 24 lbs. of rice, 25 lbs. of oatmeal, 7 lbs. of peanut butter, 2 lbs. of popcorn. About 3 qts. of bacon grease, some celery & cabbage and a good bundle of mail. I declared it a Twin Lakes holiday. Mary had also sent a piece of rhubarb pie. Little Sig and Leon are going to school at Soldotna this year.⁸⁶ The mission girls are outside and the school burned at Nondalton.

My mail read and lunch over I could still pick so I climbed the hump again. Nice picking as the wind was calm along that slope. I picked a gallon and there is still gallons more in the same patch. Leaves pick easy now so I had to run this gallon over burlap to take the leaves out. Sunday coming up and company (the hikers) soon so I raked my beach and neatened up my diggings.

September 8 – Partly Cloudy, Calm & 45°.

Through the stream and I didn't see his boat on the beach. I had taken some boiled caribou meat for him. A good start towards his [Jürgen] camp and I saw him traveling the

⁸⁴ Terry Gill (1909-1985), cannery man and miner in the Bonanza Hills beginning in 1958. Gill and his wife Victoria (1908-2004) had a cabin at the confluence of Bonanza and Little Bonanza Creeks. The site had previously been used by O.B. Millett and Jack Kinney of Iliamna in the early 20th century.

⁸⁵ Chuck Hornberger, a long-time resident of SW Alaska and lodge owner on Lake Clark; the property was purchased from trapper Frank Bell in 1969.

⁸⁶ Leon and Sig Alsworth attended Cook Inlet Academy in Soldotna, a village 8 miles SE of Kenai.



beach from Beech Creek. Packing his big lens on the tripod and a pack on his back. His boat was laying well back against the bank. "Just getting in," I asked. "I only yesterday got home from my long hike but today was such a nice day I just had to go a little ways. I saw you coming and I headed back." "Did you get to Turquoise Lake." His eyes got big and he said. "Much farther than that. I was four days away from my camp. I looked down on Telaquana Lake." He had crossed the first ridge and camped near the stream going up into sheep country. There he caught a big rainbow trout. Next he saw four good bull caribou but in bad light. Then six cows and calves. He had forded the river coming out of Turquoise Lake and met some hunters who gave him food and he ate scrambled eggs with them. He heard of hunters killing 20 caribou out of a bunch of forty and the meat was spoiling from the rain. He had gone on over the ridge looking down on Telaquana. Blueberries just blue everywhere and there he saw a black grizzly and got to within 250 feet of him and never did get found out. That bear was just very busy picking berries. He had seen the bear as a black speck - so far away and it took one hr. to walk to him. From there he headed home. "I was very tired," he said. "The pack very heavy, I have run out of oats and I count on it during a long hike." "Come up and I will give you some" I said. The wind was down on the lower lake and it took him two hrs. to paddle home.

We sampled my caribou meat and he said I will make you a bannock right now. A little fire going and he started with flour then baking powder and salt. A little shortening and then lake water and he worked it with his fingers. "This is how I get my fingers clean" he said and I took his word for it as he hadn't washed his hands. Some grease in his little frying pan which had fried fish and not washed. The mixing pan over the top for a cover. "Too fast" he said, the fire too hot. Pretty quick he knocked the cover off and the bannock was brown on top & black on the bottom. He tipped it over with "this one is mine." The next one turned out better. A light crust top and bottom and pretty doughy in the center. "How did I like it" - "ok, not too bad." With lots of blueberries it would be pretty good. "Yes, they would help" he said. Only seven days left and he would like to make another over night trip for rams if he only knew where to look. "Go 14 hrs. and see nothing," he said. He might come up country one more time and at any rate he would come by my place before time to go. Many things that he didn't want to take back with him that I could have. He wished he could stay till freeze up but he had to go. "I must be out of Alaska by Oct. 1st or your government won't like it," he said.

The sun was getting low when I pushed out and headed for the stream. I lined her through and headed up the flat lake. Fifteen till seven as I entered the upper lake and one hr. later I was on my beach. The sun had set and the cool of evening was taking over. It would frost tonight. Supper over and dishes done by nine. Through writing by ten. A light surf on my beach from an up lake breeze. Clear as a bell and 38°.

September 11 - Raining, Blowing dn. & 46°.

Before daylight I heard rain on the roof and the wind in the spruce - this was a good one.

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I slept in till six and it was still half dark getting breakfast started. I had expected Jerg to pass today but not with the lake roaring as it was. He would probably hole up in Lofstedt's or Frank Bell's old cabin – that is if he had food enough to tide him over a day. For me it would be a letter writing day. Dishes done and I just got my writing gear laid out when I happened to look out the window. There humped up on the beach was the largest beaver I have ever seen. It was Jerg humped over (in his rain parka) closing up the cockpit of his kayak. I rushed out to greet him. How was the lake? "Pretty rough I tell you." Where had he spent the night? "In my old camp under a tree." Have you had breakfast? "A little oats, I didn't build a fire." By now we were inside and me stoking the fire. I started him out with my leftover porridge with lots of dry milk and sugar. A cup of hot vinegar and honey. Then I cut up some boiled caribou and fried it, mixing in a egg when it was hot. Then two or three cups of coffee and I popped a big bowl of popcorn. What had he seen on his last big tour. He had gone up the left fork of the river at the rock pile and then up the next left headed for the divide where he had been before. Past the first canyon on the left and climbing when he learned it was raining and snowing up high so he turned back.

We [RLP and Jerg] had shook hands in case we didn't meet again before he left. "Maybe I see you at Twin Lakes again or some other place," he said. He headed down... The last I saw of him he was trudging the beach along the lower end. It would be dark before he got to camp after all. What a wind up for the last big tour at Twin Lakes. Next year he wants to bring his mother to Canada for a sightseeing tour and then if he has time & money left-go into the wilderness of B.C. for a time. He will have to play it by ear from the time he reaches Whitehorse. He must get a job and where ? Only a few hundred dollars to see him making money again. I wouldn't like to play it that close in this day and age. But I can remember starting on a six months trip with \$30.00 and getting back back with \$20.00 (1939).

September 12 – Raining, Calm & 44°.

Some improvement over yesterday morning – no wind on the lake. Raining gently and it looked as if it could rain forever. Jerg and his appetite had upset my schedule. I would have to make hotcakes again and start a fresh batch of biscuits. The griddle off of the fire and I put the caribou pot of short ribs on. Get another batch of beans cooking and write letters. I felt quite sure there would be no German visitors today. His boat still lay bottom up along the gravel bank. He would be sleeping in this morning. My birds came and I have self feeders for them now. Three short "C" rations cans filled with caribou grease. Scatter them out front and let them work at it but don't forget or you will find them empty.

I wrote and wrote and tended the fire. A trip or two to the woodshed for fuel and I saw one of my rabbits. If only I could catch one in good light for pictures. The weather would fair up a bit and then rain some more. I checked the hump, benches, down country and across the lake during the intermissions but saw no game. The colors appear much brighter and a clear day would see some film exposed.



Lunch time, a sandwich, a sample of the beans and a spare rib or two, then back to my writing. Along towards five it began to clear down country. I happened to go outside and it was fortunate that I did. Crag Mt. and the country from here up was in light rain. The brightest rainbow I believe that I have ever seen and a second rainbow above it but faint. I had meat frying and biscuits baking but they would have to carry on unattended. I grabbed the 35 mm and launched the canoe. I backed off shore for a couple shots before the rain came and it rained hard after I reached the cabin. The meat was smelling of too much fire and I found it stuck fast to the cast iron skillet. The sun dropped behind the lower slope of Falls Mt. and the excitement was over. By about Sept. 15th the sun will set in the notch formed by the Volcanic Mts. and Falls Mt. Then in six more days it will have reached the halfway point between the longest day and the shortest.

On the beach brushing my teeth after supper and there was a rooster grouse towards the point picking gravel and just now as I write one flew across my front yard. The family from across the creek must have moved near.

September 14 - Overcast, Calm & 38°.

I came onto the benches to find white caps on the lake. I had told Jerg I would come down before he flew away. I could go alright but had better take the kicker to get back. Lunch over and my film taken care of I made ready to head down. Take the little kicker along for the ride. I headed for Jerre's cabin to get out of line with the wind and the stream and headed down. Two airplanes (one was Ketchum's⁸⁷ for sure) came to Low Pass beach and I could see another lean-to there. On down and through the stream. I could see a stack of gear covered with a green tarp near Jerg's tent. He crawled out as I came near. That was his disassembled kayak under the tarp. The skin folded and in a bag. The frame in another and the two weighed more than fifty lbs. He had a plastic bag of odds and ends for me. A first aid kit, shoe grease, fish lines, lures, plastic bags, bug dope and did I want his little tent. He had used it two trips and would get a new one next time. Get a bigger, higher, one that he could move around in. This one was for use with the kayak on a river trip. I liked the little orange nylon tent. It only weighs, 2 ½ lbs. Could use it packing out for a day or two and maybe this fall yet, but I didn't want it for nothing when he was so hard up for cash. He insisted I have it for I had given him food. Finally I told him I would pay half of Babe's trip in for he would bring me grub and mail and I would pay him five dollars extra on Jerg's half of the trip. We agreed on that. It would help him by cutting down his load back to Whitehorse [Yukon Territory]. The two [Cessna] 185's took off down the lake and soon one came back with another [Cessna] 180 and landed. Noise pollution galore today. It was calm on the upper end of the lower lake and sprinkling lightly as we stood on the beach and discussed his future plans. By this time next week he might be working again. 4:30 and time I was heading back with my sack of loot. There would be more. His leftover food, tent and green tarp. I would pick it up next time down. We shook hands

⁸⁷ Ketchum Air Service, a bush flying service based on Lake Hood in Anchorage owned by "Ketch" and Marguerite Ketchum.

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and he said, "Maybe I will see you at Twin Lakes or someplace again." I paddled towards the stream and left him with his cold camp. Three months and never a warming fire. Just a little blaze to cook with. I would be in the woods and I would have the warm glow of a good fire when ever I wanted it. I hope Babe makes it in to get him out tomorrow.

I lined her through the stream and found the upper lake nearly calm with only a trace of a breeze. One airplane had flown away leaving one at the beach. Five o'clock when I headed up and at halfway I met a light breeze which picked up at the three quarter mark. Quartering to Farmer's landing I got out of it and got going, 1 hr. and 20 min. for the run. A fire going and the spare ribs on to warm up. The biscuits to bake and beans to warm. A big leaf of cabbage for greens. A fresh bucket of water and my loot stored away. It was nine o'clock before I got my writing done. Till now I had used my candle lantern but this Sept. 14th saw the little single mantle Coleman go into service. Now it would be six months before it would be retired for the summer again.

September 16 – Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 44°.

The lake rough but I wanted to get the stuff that Jerg left. I could take the pack board and be back by six. A pretty good hike. I had told Jerg I could go to the lower end of the lake in a hour and fifteen minutes. He allowed I would have to travel some to do it. A square of chocolate for the return trip. A sourdough sandwich before I started and I was crossing Hope Creek at 2 o'clock. I cut across the mouth of Low Pass Creek and traveled blueberry hill to the gravel bank and was there in one hr. An hr. ten at the bend of the beach and I went straight to Beech Creek and down the beach a few hundred yds. to Jerg's campsite. All the stuff under a small spruce where he said it would be. I left his cooking gear, empty cans, a little vinegar and his worn out rubber boots. I would pick that garbage up with the canoe. The tent and his left over food plus his plastic tarp I lashed on the Japanese pack frame. 4 o'clock when I headed back. It was clearing and a pretty sight up country. A head wind too and cooler than running with it. 5:45 when I reached the cabin. Still a fire in the stove from a good cottonwood log. Everything on to warm and I unloaded the pack board. Grub, there was very little, rice, about three good hand fulls. About that much flour. A few tea bags. Some black pepper and bullion cubes a few. A little chunk of caribou fat and a hand full of macaroni. Baking powder two full cans and more than a box of matches. I soon had everything out of sight. A clear sunset and one more sunset will see the sun in the notch formed by the Volcanic mts. and the lower slope of Falls Mt. Another month and the sun will be looking scarce but snow will brighten the day for filming. Supper over and my writing done by nine. I am surprised that no stars are out (overcast) calm and 45°.

This evening I heard that mysterious thunder again and this time far ahead a vapor trail of a very fast flying jet fighter. A pilot hurrying home to roost.

Today with my mail a letter from the hikers⁸⁸ thanking me for keeping their

⁸⁸ Hikers, refers to Van Horne, Downing, and Ward.

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supplies. Leaving Kijik the 10th Sept. and expect to be at my place Sept. 20. "Traveling slow for there is much to see," they said. A week at Twin Lakes to explore and then on to Telaquana Lake where they will be picked up Oct. 5th. I wonder how many lbs. of grub they will have left after a week here. I figure they will have to get rid of about a hundred pounds in order to pack the remainder. Good that I didn't take Babe's advice. He had said weeks ago. "They will never make it to Twin Lakes, you just as well use that grub." Not here yet but I'm thinking they will make it.

September 20 – Raining, Blowing dn. & 50°.

In Spike's cabin I had found some of the same material (tin pants which Hope had washed the character out of). A tan seat on grey pants. From the rear I would look like an elk with his buff colored rump. I spread the pants out flat on the table and the material covering the affected area – out lined one side and then folded it to get both alike. Pinned it in place. Stuck my narrow stew [?] pan inside the leg (bottom up) to keep from stitching the back side to the front side and nailed that seat patch on with grey (waxed) button and carpet thread. Looked pretty neat when done and good for many many miles and hrs. of sitting on abrasive rocks. Good to wear under my tin pants when the cold winds come. Another pair of pants got some stitching and a patch or two before it was time to bake the biscuits and heat up the caribou. One more batch and my caribou will be gone. Comes cold and freezing, caribou had better be scarce around here.

The rain stopped late in the afternoon and it was high overcast and low scattered. The wind all but died and I would take a paddle up the lake to check on the five rams still on Bell Mt.⁸⁹ On a close check I could still see white caps coming down so I cancelled out. Brushing my teeth at the beach and I heard two more shots at least as far down as Beech Creek and probably farther. Someone would be working late tonight as it was pretty dark. Now at 8 o'clock, raining down country, calm & 50°.

September 21 – Raining, Calm & 44°.

I paddled across, rounding that last point before Emerson Creek when I saw three people coming up the beach, just leaving the creek flat. I suspected they were hunters and I would stay close to shore and see who it was. Trudging slowly my way and finally I could see they had packs and good sized ones. Could it be the hikers on the wrong side of the lake. Then I could see only one rifle and one wore red leggings. Closer and I could see two wore little Swiss felt hats with the brims turned down. It was the hikers. "Going some where," I greeted them. The boy said, "Are you Dick Proenneke?" Right. And then he introduced himself, Bea & Candy. He had a full beard and longish hair. Bea looked some what like

⁸⁹ RLP's Bell Mountain is a peak approximately 5,000 ft. high north of upper Twin Lakes.



an Indian girl. A good tan and hair in braids. Candy a blond with long hair. Both big enough to carry a load but I wouldn't expect them to pack such a mountain of gear. "How come you are on the wrong side of the lake," I asked. Floyd Denison on Lake Clark had on their map located me on the side they were on. How far had they come since yesterday morning. Last night they had camped in the cottonwoods on Emerson and the night before at the head of the Chilikadrotna River. There they had cleaned up a dirty campsite and asked some hunters to haul the garbage out and got snickered at.

I told them to dump their packs in the canoe and I would haul them to my place. I was surprised at the size and weight of those three packs. Three of them made a canoe load bulkwise. They could hike on up to Jerre's cabin and I would come for them. I headed for my beach with a following breeze. At my beach I set their packs under the overhang of the roof, built up the fire a bit for hot water and with an extra paddle aboard I headed for Jerre's point. Walter was bow paddler and the two girls the load. We came across in fifteen minutes. That was the easiest mile they had made in ten days and since they left the shore of Lake Clark. All preferred tea and popped some corn and made sourdough sandwiches.

I had prepared the cabins for tourists – just as well make use of them. I asked them how they would go for living in a cabin instead of the little tent. They would like that so I tried Bea's pack for size and weight and we headed up the timber trail. The load on that good pack frame was not too bad but on the mt., it would be too much. I left them to get squared away and came down to do some jobs I had been wanting to do. Cut my weak canoe paddle – shorten it six inches and make a new glued splice. The other splice had done well and I wondered how come it didn't give way by this time. I had wrapped the splice with nylon tape and when I cut and peeled it off the paddle fell apart. A new splice cut and glued and wrapped tightly with nylon cord to hold it until it dries. The kids came down to break into that heavy duffle bag of food & fuel.

Dry beans, split peas, lentils, cheese, a big chunk of it. Many big bags of mixed nuts. Loaves of heavy bread that they had baked in Anch. It was green with mold. Cooking oil and stove fuel. I told them I would camp right here until I got the load used up to an easy pack and then go. They had figured six days to Telaquana.

The kids all three from Calif. and in college. This was part of their college work. The gear for the trip they had to furnish but the supplies they had received a grant to pay for. It had been good so far. They had been flown up to the glacier in Lake Clark Pass and then ran the river back to Lake Clark in their three Klepper Aerous kayaks. They had visited in Nondalton talking to the old people learning how it was in the old days. One Native woman said she had been over the trail to Telaquana many times and it took five days if you walked all the time. At thirteen she had packed her baby (on her back) over the trail. They had searched out the old village of Kijik⁹⁰ at the mouth of the Kijik River. Part of the Russian Orthodox church (three walls) still stands. Here and there depressions where the huts had been. A squatter living there now had torn out the grave markers in

⁹⁰ Historic Kijik village is the abandoned 19th century Dena'ina village on Lake Clark and now part of the Kijik National Historical Landmark, perhaps the largest Athapaskan site in Alaska. The Dena'ina word for the village is Qizhje, "many people gather."

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the cemetery and built a cabin there. The Natives very unhappy about that. Walter with all his other gear packs a book that must weigh six pounds or more. In this book the vegetation of Alaska and they must study and make a report of what grows here back in Anch. There will be much library study to complete their report. I think they hate to see Oct. 5 and time to fly back to civilization.

September 22 – Raining, Calm & 50°.

Raining gently – again the weather thickened, warmed and rained instead of cooler weather which I felt sure would come. I had invited the kids down for sourdough hotcakes this morning. They had no time piece as their only watch had been dunked in a river crossing. Breakfast well started I went up the beach and gave them a growl. This morning I had used three cups of flour instead of two (for Leon, Sig & I) and had none to many hotcakes. Only Bea went for a helping of porridge. Raining a steady rain and they stayed awhile. On their maps they traced their route till now. One narrow escape crossing a fork of the river in Lake Clark Pass. Candy had been swept down stream and lodged on a gravel bar along the far shore. Walter went too and couldn't get out of his pack and as luck would have it he drifted into shallow water. So cold he was helpless. Two on one side and one on the other. They threw Candy the end of a rope and after her tying it around herself she started across. Again she lost her footing but they dragged her ashore. For three days they tried to cross it and finally gave up. On the map of Twin Lakes they wanted to fill in all of my names for the streams and mts.

September 28 – Fog, Light Snow & 30°.

Down in the brush along the creek and looking for a good place to climb out I ran onto the one and only hornets nest I have seen here. A typical paper type, cone shaped with a round top. Built around the main branch of a large willow. A real substantial set up. Hornets to be seen through the small round hole low on southern exposure. It was good for a few feet of film before I climbed out and traveled on.

It was three o'clock when I reached the cabin. Many nice early snow scenic shots with beautiful cloud effects along the way down. A note on my open writing tablet. A Randy Jones⁹¹ of the Park Service and he wrote that if the three hikers stopped here to tell them they could stay here on the lakes and would be picked up here Oct. 5th. Perhaps they would pass Twin Lakes, he wrote and not to worry about it if I didn't see them. He also had a message from Bob Belous⁹² who reviews my film footage. "Doing great- some of the best film we have." And on the next page another note. "Read your book and finally made it here. Sorry we missed you but we saw 'One Man's Alaska.' Ted Foss...& Charles Tulin...Anch."

⁹¹ Randy Jones was an NPS Resource Planning Advisor for the Alaska Task Force.

⁹² Robert Belous (1935-2001) was an NPS park planner, photographer, and subsistence expert with the Alaska Task Force.



I put in at the hikers campsite. One thing about them, you find nothing but their tracks after they leave. Even the stones from around the fire were gone. I made up my pack and cached the canoe bottom up in the stunted spruce. A good shelter for the gear I was leaving. I didn't pack much food for I expected to be back by noon tomorrow. Just as I was ready to start the old folks came by. Well into their sixties but very active and I had heard that they take a long hike every day. The lady allowed I would get caught out in the dark and I agreed but that would be no problem. Yesterday from the big rock with the brass plate the hikers and I had looked at the country they would travel. I knew where they would climb out of the timber and where they intended to hit the skyline. I took off packing my sleeping bag and grub on the light Jap. pack frame and my camera film and accessories in the front pouch of my ammo pack pockets. Skirt the beaver ponds on the right I had told them and now I found another new pond had been added since I was there last. Near sun down and a beaver was using the pond as a swimming hole. On across the brushy flat to the timber and a moose traveled game trail heading down country. To the big timber filled notch in the lower bench and a big patch of now spent cow parsnip. Across one clear running small creek and then a 2nd before pulling up a steep draw and then out onto the open point of the first bench. The near full moon was now clearing the right shoulder of Black Mt. A beautiful sight against the very blue sky. It was cool and would no doubt frost tonight. At the base of the 2nd bench and a good sized lake. My turning point when headed for the Bonanza Hills.⁹³ This time I climbed on towards the skyline. Enough light from the moon that I cast a shadow but still it was a problem to tell exactly where I was on the mt. I didn't want to get too close to the hikers camp in the dark. Walter was packing a Winchester model 70, .300 Magnum for bear protection. Early in their hike they had abandoned eight smoked fish because they thought it might attract the bears. I didn't care to be shot or shot at with a .300 Mag. so I planned to stay a little down country from their camp. A cool breeze was coming over the ridge so at the last bench I found where a bear had dug for a ground squirrel. A nice little notch into the hillside. I pulled some dry grass to cover the dirt and spread Jerg's plastic tarp. Next my chunk of sheep skin and then the mummy bag. I folded the other half of the tarp over the top and put my camera and other gear under the edge of it for it would frost heavy with such a clear night. I turned in and noticed that it was about nine o'clock. It was cool sleeping. The sheep skin wasn't long enough. Frost formed at the opening of the bag. I watched the moon travel across the sky and twice I heard geese going by. Finally I got the place warmed up and went to sleep.

September 29 – Clear, Calm & Cold.

Four o'clock and finally 5:30. I could see to travel so got up. My L.L. Bean shoe pacs stiff as a board and I had to pull hard to get them on. I jogged back and fourth along the gravel bench above to get warmed up before packing my gear. I looked along the edge of

⁹³ Bonanza Hills are a group of low mountains between the upper Chilikadrotna and Mulchatna Rivers about 20 miles west of the Twin Lakes.



the ridge for the hikers camp and failed to find it. I felt sure that it would be up country from me. I headed for the turned over Cessna 170. Their route would take them near it. I found solid snow cover on the crest of the ridge and came over a rise to see the airplane just a little on my right. Tracks in the snow there but only two people. Two sets of tracks coming in from the direction of the lower lake and two leaving towards Turquoise Lake. Certainly they hadn't passed already this morning. They must be camped on the creek coming down from the lick. Snow cover was only partial and I soon lost their tracks. Why only two people. I suspect it could be hunters who passed. A couple miles more put me on the slope looking down on the creek. A nice little stream crooked and lined with willows and grassy parks. I glassed the country up and down. No sign of the hikers or their tent. Now I was thinking I should have back tracked at the airplane to see where the tracks came from so I went back. The airplane a total wreck. Both wings damaged and part of the tail. One landing strut torn out, the engine and instruments gone. One seat missing and the other a wreck. I back tracked there and found they had only walked out and back taking pictures. No one had come from the lower lake. I made a big circle on solid snow and learned the two sets of tracks had come from and left towards Turquoise. The hikers must be still towards Twin Lakes country so I trudged back across the rolling hill country of the ridge. I had seen caribou tracks in the snow and now ahead of me a good looking bull. A long ways ahead but on my route. I came carefully over the last rise to find antlers facing me. I hurried to set the tripod for he was heading my way. A pretty sight in the view finder as he broke over the rise. He spooked and floated about in that graceful trot that means - if it's a race you want I am the guy who will race with you. He circled about and out of sight. I went on and down from snow cover. I was looking down on the lower lake again. By now the kids should be on the move but no sign of them. Now I suspected I had camped above them and they were out of sight lower on the ridge and heading for Turquoise so I circled down that way and again on solid snow cover on the crest of the ridge. I hit three sets of tracks going in the right direction. Tracks made in wet snow of yesterday. Now I was on the trail. On bare spots I would lose the trail but pick it up on the snow farther on. It passed below the plane and I now got the picture. They had passed it before they saw it and came back to take pictures. Only two. Candy had stayed with the packs. I followed on and was heading near to where I had stood when glassing the creek. Circling down the slope I saw them in a little hollow of the bank on a nice grassy park in the willows. No snow down there. Now was a chance to get some footage of them packing. It had gone so well yesterday they came all the way to the creek and arrived just as the moon was clearing the mts. The same time I was leaving the timber near the lower lake. Only four miles to go today so they had slept in and just now ready to start down the creek. As Bea was leader of the three I gave her the note. She read it and tried to figure why the Park Service wanted to stop them short of their goal. They (all three) agreed that they wanted to go on to Telaquana and be picked up there Oct. 5th so when and if the plane came here I would tell the pilot he would find them there. It was now 10 o'clock and the first order of business was crossing the creek. Rocks icy and not safe with a heavy pack. Better to find a gravel bottom and wade. So, off comes hiking boots and socks and on goes shoe pacs over bare feet. Wade across and change back again. Bea threw hers

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across to me (even hers much larger than mine). A few seconds of cold water is good for the tired feet and mine felt fresh after several miles already today. Now they would go – pay no attention to me. I would shoot from all angles as I came to them. Down the creek and across the lower end of a ridge and a view of the Mulchatna⁹⁴ River which they would have to ford. Only about a mile to go and they stopped for lunch. Out came the peanuts, pilot bread, cheese, peanut butter, blueberry jam (they had made here), sardines. I said, “no wonder you don’t go far in a day. Get a late start and spend the rest of the day eating.” “Oh, but you must eat good to keep your strength up.” I guessed that was true as they are strong under a heavy pack. They had lots of food – why didn’t I stay overnight and go back tomorrow. That I would like to do but I still had enough time left to make it back and I didn’t want to cross the river twice for no good reason. They would spend a day on Turquoise and then two days to Telaquana and a day to spare before the plane came. It was twenty till two, how long would it take me to reach the lower lake. On their map it was about seven miles. Bea said I might make it by five o’clock. I would stay low on the ridge, no snow and very little climbing. Just below us the creek we had crossed farther up and a stepping stone crossing. It was wide with many boulders. I stayed to get them shouldering their packs and winding down onto the big flat along the river. From the bottom they waved and trudged on towards a possible fording place. I crossed the creek and headed back along or very near the old Native trail from Lake Clark to Telaquana Lake.⁹⁵ It was clear and calm, the ridge climbing on my left and the big flat country below on my right. Nearing my lower lake to Bonanza Hills trail I would climb a bit to shorten the route and drop down again not far from the lake I had passed in the moonlight the evening before. A big country and there must be caribou somewhere so I stopped a few minutes to glass the country. A good sized lake in the distance and a camp of some kind on the far side. On my side and maybe three miles from me four caribou there with white capes and I would bet they were bulls. I was tempted to head that way but if I did I would be another night on the trail and I didn’t relish that being prepared as I was. I should have taken some caribou hide for a ground cloth under my sleeping bag. I traveled on, entering the timber at the same place I had left it. My load was getting heavy by the time I threaded my way among the gravel knolls to the beach and the canoe. Ten past five my watch said. The tent campers were out on the beach in front of their camp taking many combinations of pictures of themselves with a caribou rack. I would have stopped by but had a good ways to go and a cool and strong breeze was blowing up the lake. I used the kicker and in less than one hr. I was lining through the stream. The upper lake more calm and I made it in twenty minutes. My gear packed in and a fire going. The caribou and bean pot on. Water heating for a bath and laundry. It was eight o’clock when I turned out the lantern. I just knew I would sleep good tonight. That four inches of foam rubber under me never felt so good.

⁹⁴ Mulchatna River is a 175-mile long river that drains Turquoise Lake and is the major tributary of the Nushagak River, known for its great fishing, beaver trapping, and hunting. The Dena’ina word for the upper river is Vandaztuntnu, “caribou hair stream.”

⁹⁵ Variant of the Telaquana Trail, a Dena’ina trail that ran from the Kijik villages on the north side of Lake Clark 50 miles north to the villages on Telaquana Lake in the Kuskokwim drainage.

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October 1 – Snowing, Blowing up & 23°.

This evening the surf is still heavy on the beach but the wind is nothing compared to this afternoon. I had told the hikers that I expected the fair weather to hold until after the full moon. That would put them at their destination. I did forget to warn them that once it is October winter can come over night. Snow can be sixteen inches deep and below zero by the 15th. At sunset it was only partly cloudy but now at 7:40 there is snow in the air, temp. 24°.

October 4 – Snowing, Blowing dn. & 34°.

As it grew lighter I could see the ground was white. That is one advantage of sleeping in the upper bunk. It was snowing, the lake still roaring. I was glad I came across instead of going to Jerre's cabin. From there I would have had to walk to the lower end and ford the stream.

Always at this time of year a wind down the lake is warm and brings melting snow.

My blueberries still frozen for I had insulated them with some sheep skin but they would thaw shortly. Today would be a blueberry syrup making day. I went up to Spike's cabin and got the big water bucket to cook them in. Stopped at Hope's cabin⁹⁶ for some bottles from the big glass box. On my stove I dumped in half the total and got them melted and lots of juice and then I emptied the storage can. The big bucket was two thirds full. What to use in thickening the juice after it came to a boil? The girls (hikers) had used flour and water in making the blueberry jam they packed away from here. I had some corn starch and would give it a try. No instructions for my operation so I mixed a generous amount with my sugar and mixed it good. Stirred in three fourths of it and cooled a sample. Not thick enough so I added a second generous helping. That would have to do. Probably I would be digging the syrup out with a knife. First before adding the sugar and corn starch I separated the pulp from the juice. Ran it through the wire strainer and then squeezed the pulp dry in a section of game bag. Half of the batch filled my large stainless mixing bowl (1 ga. 2 pts.) with juice. In went the sugar and starch and I stirred it until the sugar was dissolved. Cooked it a bit and funneled it into my bottles. Two batches and by that time my kitchen had taken on a blue look. To the last batch I added some maple flavoring. Five big bottles (one of them a big syrup can) and a stubby. Enough syrup to last all winter and then some. I had intended to use honey but at \$50.00 per 5 gal. can this is better and I am thankful for the cold weather to pick the berries.

⁹⁶ Hope Carrithers' cabin about 200 yards east of the Proenneke cabin built by Spike Carrithers and RLP in the early 1970s as a guest cabin.

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October 6 – Rain, Calm & 40°.

The sleeves of my black navy sweater were shot beyond repair. Cut them out and make a vest of it. I have more clothes with short or no sleeves. Lots of freedom when swinging an axe, sawing or paddling but it makes for colder hands hiking and packing the camera. My wool halibut jacket to mend, short sleeves, that one.

I stoked up the fire and popped a big bowl of popcorn to see my mending finished. By then it was getting dark and time to get supper. Still snowing and melting most places and in the morning I expect the snow to be near lake level.

Four journals and a half reread and some of the mistakes corrected. About eight notebooks filled in five months. I am well ahead of my usual one per month. The days ahead will see a slow down unless the weather cooperates. 2600 ft. of film to see me through Oct. but I have written Trexler telling him that I plan to be here at freeze up and if he wants to see it maybe I had better have 10 more rolls. So far I have averaged about 17 rolls per mo. and I wonder how many miles. I could read my journals and make a close guess.

Tonight a light surf on my beach, snowing (the ground getting white) and 36°. A good snow cover will expose the moose.

October 16 – Overcast, Calm & 25°.

This morning as I entered the woodshed for my fire starting kindling the place fairly exploded. The squirrel had been in a big cardboard box and I startled him as much as he did me getting out of there. He was plenty scared and angry too. Such language as that guy did spit out from a spruce behind the shed. What was he doing in that box anyway? The flaps folded and tucked leaving only a small opening in the center. I took it down and opened it. So that was it – after the kids had left I found two loaves of their heavy bread on the stump at Spike's cabin. I brought one down for bird and squirrel feed. The stuff saws just like wood and tastes only slightly different. I had put it in the box and forgotten about it. The squirrel has eaten about half of it. No wonder he leaves the smoke fish skins on the stump untouched.

October 18 – Snowing, Breeze up & 15°.

It was foggy and snowing – the lake steaming – it was a wintery looking morning. Hotcakes for breakfast and they really taste good with such weather conditions.

Only one helping of beans left so I put them in a bowl and got another batch going. I noticed that the last half gallon of my fresh blueberries were taking on a slightly moldy flavor so I cooked them a bit and added sugar. A few small repair jobs to do while



the kettle boiled. One shoulder strap on my camera gear pack sack was getting weak with age. Walter Ward had told me that he has one and knows where he can get one and will send me one. I hope he has a good memory. Snowing still and I dug out a stack of "Grit" newspapers that Babe had brought quite some time ago. I was the one who got Babe & Mary started with a gift subscription several years ago.

The temp. dropped slowly. By noon it was down to ten and I was due to get in more wood. The breeze was cold on the beach but in the woods, a perfect day for the job. I limbed and bucked two down trees for packing. I had heard and seen swan today. Like grey ghosts they were against the snowy sky. The swan really a beautiful bird in flight. Very long narrow wings and a neck to match. I had made seven trips over the timber trail. Each trip requiring the time to bake a pan of biscuits. I had been to the cabin and saw that my rising biscuits were starting to settle so I stoked the fire and put them to baking. Next time in I checked. Time for a cup of tea before they were ready to pop out of the pan. (Sig and Leon's term.) One last trip and I didn't take the pack board. I had a long pole to pack this trip. At the lot line between me and Hope I heard swan and looking up I saw three and they turned towards the lake. Getting dark but I could see they were gliding on arched wings. Out they went and circled back losing altitude fast. They intended to land near the beach. Talking as they came down behind the trees. I went down the path to Hope's cabin and very slowly made my way to the beach. Not down country so they had to be up and not very far. Through a spruce I saw one on the water close to the beach and two on the beach. A dark grey this years bird and an adult. I went back over the path and to Spike's cabin where I moved directly down country along the standing brush. They had drifted up and I saw the first one directly out and not a hundred feet away. Then the other two moved into view talking contentedly. The grey one noticeably smaller. The adults with very long buff colored necks and snow white bodies and wings. They moved out as if alarmed a bit but then drifted back in a bit farther up. I moved back and up the trail without disturbing them. Sometime back I had seen a large flock led by a dark grey swan - so - a young one was getting a chance to test his leadership.

Pretty dark when I got back to the cabin. Part of living just has to be coming back to a snug warm cabin after an afternoon in the cold. The thermometer said 7°, still snowing and that same cold breeze up the lake. Those fresh cooked beans tasted extra good and I fried some lunch meat that came down from Farmer's sheep trail on the mt., my usual green stuff, compliments of Babe. Again last trip he brought 5 doz. eggs. I wanted to pay but he said no, you built the chicken house.

October 25 - Partly Cloudy, Breeze dn. & 38°.

Along the trail in the timber a seven foot section of log (about ten inches through on the big end), leaning against a tree. Fred Cowgill had placed it there more than twelve years ago. I thumped it with my walking stick. Solid, I would come back to Farmer's landing with the canoe. Bring saw and pack board and pack it out.

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Past two when I reached the cabin and just in time. The world turned grey and it rained on all sides. Only an Oct. shower and had nearly stopped by the time I had finished my sandwich. The log, (cut in half) made a fair load coming down grade to the lake. Along the trail I saw several eight to 10 inch dead spruce. Tall and straight real good wood. Bucked in lengths and packed to the lake shore before deep snow comes I could haul them in with the sled.

October 28 – Partly Cloudy, Calm & 23°.

I had the camera and scope along. I wanted to go down the Chilikadrotna as far as trap rock (a big erratic on top of a gravel knoll. Two steel traps have lain on it all these years since I was first there.) for from the rock you have a clear view of the low country. I had never been there this late in the season. But first I would check on the Oregonians camp. The nice old couple who took long hikes every day and their talkative son who took still longer hikes. They came from a beautiful state and the coast country with much wilderness. Around the last point and down along the beach. Their tent was gone and had been for weeks but there set the egg shaped sheet metal heater with a few lengths of stove pipe beside it. I came into the beach and went to investigate. Three gas can boxes of odds and ends that they didn't want to take back or didn't have room for. Spruce branches, firewood and big rocks lay everywhere. They had packed much gravel from the beach to anchor the wall of the GI pyramid tent. My nice little clump of spruce on the beach where I had camped two days waiting to cross to Arlen's cabin was a mess. The man had a chainsaw and just sawed the heart out of it. Cut a hole through six feet wide and put a pole across seven feet up. A meat pole for his caribou. The branches lay where they fell. Nylon cord in bits and pieces tied to everything. A knife had been used to hasten the chore of getting away. They may have taken long hikes for exercise but not to go to the bathroom. Toilet paper scattered from the tent back fifty yds. They had been there a long time and that heater required considerable wood to heat the big tent. Many spruce had been cut and not dead spruce. A few boughs tossed over the fresh stumps to hide them and the rest where they fell. Not particular about cutting close to the ground or using the tops. It had taken me three hrs. to paddle down and I had arrived at 12 noon. I had two fires going on the beach and worked nearly two hours before I called it good enough. I would go no farther today. I thought of taking the stove and pipe down to Frank Bell's old cabin⁹⁷ but it is in such bad shape the stove would soon rust out. I would haul it back and put it in O'Connel's cabin.⁹⁸ No stove for heat there. Some stew pans and other kitchen gear I would put in Spike or Hope's cabin. A thin foam rubber mattress could go there too. I loaded up and headed for Arlen's cabin. A big party had been there. The first thing I noticed when I walked up the path was that the roof covering had blown off again. Two courses of paper on the up country side and one on the other. Under the table 10 lbs. of

⁹⁷ Frank Bell's cabin on the upper Chillkadrotna River was used as a line cabin for trapping in the 1960s and early 70s.

⁹⁸ O'Connel's cabin, a variant of the Lewis Vanderpool cabin on the south side of the lower Emerson Creek. A hunting camp built by Lewis "Buster" Vanderpool in early 1960s.



potatoes that had frozen and now running black juice out onto the floor. Moldy bread and cheese on the table. The place left as if they had just gone down to the lake and would be right back. Evidence of a squirrel being in and I searched for a hole. Out back at the left corner the claw marks of a bear four feet above the ground. The building covered with "insulating board with a tar surface on each side. Mr. bear had gone right through that but there was a lot of junk inside and I doubt that he had gone in. The paper blown off still in fair shape and I rolled it up and put it inside. I took an old gas can box apart and plugged the hole so the squirrels couldn't get in. Picked up some litter about the place and decided it was time I was paddling. I set the scope up on the beach for a quick look for sheep or caribou over on the high ridge towards the lick but saw none. I headed up on a dead calm lake and the sun getting low. My route would take me past the four empty jet fuel drums and I had brought two five gallon cans along plus a one gallon with the end out to pour with. Each drum had more than two gallons remaining and I ended up with 10 gallons of "Jet fuel B." Now if I had 10 gallons of stove oil to mix with it I would have lantern fuel from here on. By now I had a pretty sizable load and headed on up. A disturbance in the water ahead and as I got near a big fish rolled twice. A big red I do believe and the first one I saw roll this fall. This was the poorest year ever for reds at Twin Lakes. I paddled and followed rising bubbles. The water shallow and I saw two big fish and felt sure they were red salmon. Halfway up the lake and I heard a Super Cub and saw one on wheels coming from the low country and Turquoise. He came on up and gave me a high fly by and I knew what he was thinking. That guy has got a moose in that canoe. That big egg shaped stove laying on its side would look like a moose hide rolled up. He went on up the upper lake and in due time I heard him coming back along Falls Mt. A tour of the big timber patch at Emerson Creek and then here he came head on. This time he was going to see. He came plenty close enough and then headed on down and back Turquoise way. The sun had set and the light was leaving the peaks before I got to the stream. That big moon came out from behind Crag Mt. I lined her through and then stopped at the mouth of Emerson to deliver the stove. I hope the boys will make good use of it. Quarter till six when I left the beach and the moon climbing the slope of Cowgill Mt. The evening star was bright over Low Pass. This was a nice evening to paddle. I could see the snow on Hope Creek flat and used that as a guide to my beach. I was only a couple hundred yds. out when I caught sight of my cabin. Everything squared away and supper over by nine o'clock - my writing done by ten. Clear and calm (a beautiful night) and 22°.

October 31 - Overcast, Lt. Breeze up & 25°.

Last night when I turned in the full moon was out in force - very white as it is in the dead of winter. I expected it to be about 10° this morning and was surprised to see it 25°.

Dishes done and the up lake breeze had calmed and now it was down the lake. Later, a spot of sun down country and soon the overcast was clearing out. This would be the day to climb to the bear den above the cottonwoods. I didn't like to but I would wear



my Canadian pacs. Not cold enough for the felt liners but they gave me more room than the snug fitting L.L. Beans. I had been having a little trouble with the little toe of my left foot. It was sore and side pressure when traveling along a mt. slope made it rather painful. I had soaked it in hot water – doctored it with salve and sometimes I thought it was better only to have it flare up again. Let it hurt I would climb anyway This would be a climbing day so I loaded my gear on the Japanese pack frame. Good to have both hands free and a good walking staff. The breeze was just right as I paddled across. I would climb to the left of the big rock face and then travel into the wind along the slope to the canyon and the den on the far side.

November 1 – Snowing, Calm & 30°.

Pretty dark when I looked out – only a trace of snow came during the night but it was snowing lightly. It was good that I had climbed the mt. yesterday. It would have been a chore today.

After my spuds, bacon & egg, I lugged in the full five gallon can of honey – that had stood under an outside table since Babe brought it. Sugared and solid, it would take some doing to get it warm to the top. First I blocked it up clear of the stove top but soon decided that would be very slow so I went to Spike's cabin for Jim Shake's big dish pan. The can in and filled with water. Something like a bean cooking day – tend the fire and do odd jobs about the cabin. This would be a spoon sanding and finishing day. It takes a heap of sanding to get a good smooth finish and so I sanded first one and then another a few times around. The snow fall increased and began to pile up. Solid grey as if it could snow forever. By noon I had the spoons ready for the super satin Flecto. Lunch past and the spoons drying near the stove. I made an improvement on the Jap. pack frame for packing my 400 mm lens. A 4 ½" dia. can 4" deep mounted to the right of center. Just big enough to set the lens in (big end down). A strap at the top to hold it secure. Mounted separately from the camera and tripod I can use them without disturbing the lens.

By now the can was warm halfway to the top. Full to the top and soft to the touch. I would poke a clean stick down through and strike oil. It was a good idea but I hadn't anticipated pressure from below. Up and down a couple times with the stick – it was loosening up. Then clear honey appeared and I had no room for the excess. Over the top and down the side into the water. The top had been damaged in shipping and the cap refused to screw on. I was pretty busy salvaging honey as it came out. A finger licking good time and thankful that the pressure was soon equalized. All of my empty jars full and the can went outside to cool again.

November 8 – Overcast, Breeze dn. & 34°.

Slowly it circled down and past my cabin then a turn over the lake and me, then over the



cabin again. Soon it concentrated on me and I paddled on to the spit. A low pass up the beach and down the lake. Another pass and this time a couple scraps of paper drifted down as it started its pass. I wasn't surprised when the door pushed open and a box tumbled down 50 yds. in from shore. A hundred yds. from me and I hurried to pick it up to show them I had found it. A pass going down and the turbo twin otter flew on down the lower lake. The box, about 14 inches square and taped nearly solid with nylon tape. I knew it was film from the Park Service.

Now we would have colder weather again.

My gear packed in and the fire revived, I opened the big box. In the center with wadded newspaper packed tightly around it a second box. A box of 20 rolls of film and on top a letter from Keith Trexler. It read "your letter of 1 October arrived here just last week. Yes, we definitely would like winter footage! It's the one subject we're really lacking. Any wildlife action would be highly desirable. I also remember your ice shots as being really great. All your footage is great - no specific ideas for making them better. We're sending 20 rolls of film via an air drop by OAS I'm sending a copy of this letter to Babe and one with the film. Good luck! Keith."

So - now I have a good supply of film to work with. A total of a bit over 3000 ft. That should last a good long time in winter unless I ask Babe to do some flying in caribou country and perhaps over the proposed park area. After freeze up the moose should move back up the lake. If the snow gets deep the sheep will be on the face of the mt. All kinds of possibilities.

November 14 - Overcast, Calm & 26°.

Today I would do a chore I had been thinking on since last May. At that time I had received a big brown envelope from the Montrose, Iowa, Elementary School. One letter each from the 4th grade teacher and all of her 26 students. At that time I had a bundle of letters to answer. Her sending me 26 letters of questions seemed as if she was trying to get even for something I did or didn't do. She was sorry that she hadn't sent them earlier and I was sorry she had sent them. (period)

Those little people had really worked at writing. Some did a better job of writing than I and others had erased half a page and started over. Many had a half dozen questions and others none. It would hardly be fair to answer only those with questions but to answer 26, yee gods. Finally I decided on one letter to the teacher and class. Give them a run down on this years activities and then on each students sheet of paper answer their individual questions and a little note for those who had no questions. The main letter to the teacher and class amounted to 10 pages (both sides) and then the stack of 26.

The wind picked up and the snow increased. This could be a real Nov. snowstorm. I wrote and wrote and watched the weather. The light began to fail and I lit the candle lantern. It was time for supper when I scribbled the last note to one who wanted to know

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what Alaska was like and how I kept warm at night. All through the pile, questions as only 4th graders can ask them. All liked the building of the cabin best but liked the birds and animals too.

So - I will put a new address on that brown package and send it back. The kids, most of them will be 5th graders I hope. A few may have moved or changed school. I'm trusting that the darling teacher will see that each gets his or her letter one way or another for I feel that those little guys put a lot of effort into the writing of them and must think I have forgotten just how much effort it was.

November 28 - Overcast, Breeze dn. & 36°.

The weather was clearing - patches of blue over head. It was like a day in May. Now, just suppose that Babe should try it on a Thanksgiving day. I wouldn't know if the ice was good for the "T craft." I would check that good ice off Carrithers' point. With my ice measuring stick and chisel I went over the snowshoe trail to the point. The ice clear of snow or frost and very slippery. I walked off shore and heard no complaint so I kept going. Out 50 yds. I cut a small hole. Real close to 3 inches of good solid ice. Good enough and I worked back this way a hundred yds. from the beach...About 2 ½ inches of ice out from my beach. If he came I would direct him up to the point.

The ice seemed good enough for travel, I would celebrate by traveling the ice on Thanksgiving day. From the woodshed my homemade ice creepers came out of hiding. Oil drum metal soles with short sheet metal screws going through from the top side. I had just put new bindings on a short time ago. I lashed them on and with binoculars hanging from my neck I headed for Jerre's point. Perfect traction with those extra sharp creepers but nothing under the heels, so I couldn't really stretch out and go. Three fourths of the way over and the ice began to crack. Far enough and I glassed for sheep. None, or any trails in the snow filled washes. I swung back a quarter and headed down country pushed by that nice breeze and how easy it slides over that slick ice. I was glad that I was rough shod and afoot instead of paddling. Down a half and I turned back. It would be time to start my special dinner which would amount to an early supper.

From the cache I had taken down some mixed nuts and some of Mike's fudge. I boiled some spuds, and some cabbage, carrots, and rutabagas. Opened a can of Alberta peaches and a small can of ham (Plumrose). I would have sourdough biscuits and honey. Feed my birds extra good. That young one is a character. If he is here alone he takes all the time in the world to eat his cold hotcake. Sit on my hand and take little nibbles, set and look around and then nibble some more. Dinner can be getting cold or hotcakes burning, he couldn't care less.

It was a pretty good Twin Lakes meal and all done in daylight. The full moon was just getting a good start when I emptied the dish water. I would just tie on my creepers and take a walk to settle my dinner. Against that warm breeze I headed for 1st point. The



moon hazy at best and now and again behind a cloud. To 1st point and not a crack from the ice. How long would it take to walk back. Twenty five minutes is good time paddling. The breeze maybe seven miles per hr. so it helped a bit. Twenty five minutes exactly so it's a toss up, walk or paddle, same difference. 6:30 when I came in the cabin and so ended my activities on Thanksgiving day 1974.

Now at 7:30, that hazy full moon, holding the weather fair, that warm breeze down and 37°.

November 29 – Overcast, Calm & 23°.

Hotcakes for breakfast and today I would take a tour up [to] the Lofstedt's cabin to pick up my groceries. The Matthews⁹⁹ would make a list and the price of things they were leaving and I would send them a check. A trace of snow last night or early morning so the ice would be better for travel. I would push my sled which would make walking easier and safer in case of thin ice. Also I could take my ice chisel and snowshoes along.

I was on my way at 10:38 and found the traveling good. Well up the right hand side and I spotted the Super Cub on the strip. I thought it had gone the same day the chopper left but there it was. Had they left it for some strange reason. It was 11:50 when I came to the head of Lofstedt's bay.¹⁰⁰ I appreciated my snowshoes for the short trip to the cabin. Mike's snowshoes still leaning against a spruce and the chainsaw still there. Smoke coming from the cabin chimney. Someone rattling around inside. As I got out of my snowshoes the door opened and there was Mike and his wife and the Cub pilot. (John) "Still here," Mike said, "and getting pretty low on grub. I guess you saw that dressed...porcupine hanging from the eave log." I had but didn't look close. I had noticed the beaver type teeth and figured it for a beaver. "We are eating rabbit now but that porky is next and we just finished most of the lynx cat," he said. "How was the lynx?" I had heard they were good eating. "It was real good, tastes something like pork but no fat." Well, what was the story about still being here. "Can't get out. The [Cessna] 180 came and the snow so sticky he couldn't get off with more than one and the Cub pilots wife had gone back in it. They could have gone on the copter but wasn't expecting to go that day and not ready and he was on flight plan and couldn't wait. Now it is clear every night and socked in every day and the weather between here and there not flyable according to reports."

"A plane down on a trip from Kenai to Port Alsworth. A Bill Johnson¹⁰¹ in an all white Aeronca Chief. (He is building real close to Babe's between the beach and the runway.) He has been missing for a few days now but the weather so bad they have been unable to fly search missions. The weather has been mild and if unhurt he could be doing pretty good."

⁹⁹ Mr. and Mrs. Mike Mathews were possibly from the Kenai.

¹⁰⁰ RLP's Lofstedt's Bay, a small cove at the head of upper Twin Lakes near the Lofstedt cabin.

¹⁰¹ Bill Johnson (1940-1989), a pilot, and carpenter who resided with his family at Port Alsworth. He died when his plane went down in Cook Inlet in 1989.



When it is flyable the Cub pilot will take Mike and his wife over in the Cub (legal for three) and come back for the gear. "Your letters are on the way," Mike said. "They are in the Cub over on the strip ready to take off." As for grub, instead of a lot left over we may have some and we may be down to beg some from you. They did have a large box of chili powder, a large jar of seasoning salt and a full can of black pepper. Out of sugar so we can't make any fudge today and out of flour. The menu for today macaroni and rabbit all cooked in one pot. Burning aviation gas in the gas lantern and doing pretty good.

We watched the weather and it went from a quarter mile to a 500 ft. ceiling but to late to start. When I had a reading of -10° they had a -25° over at the airstrip. That explains the bitter cold I have experienced above the upper lake a time or two. It can get very cold there and a big change no more than a mile down.

We ate on that poor rabbit and had tea to drink. Listened to the news and learned the search planes were still grounded. If the weather was no good tomorrow they would walk down and if it was flyable they would give me a flyby. I paid them for the groceries plus the 4 lbs. of beans they had given me and prepared to head down. They would go with me a stretch to see how the ice was. About five inches at the head of the bay where it had been iced over early. Out farther 3 ½ was about it. Past the first point coming down and the mouth of the bay they headed across to visit Frank Bell's cabin.¹⁰² I followed my sled track under an entirely flyable overcast. That full moon of the 29th would be out tonight. Getting dark and still a few coals in my stove when I arrived. Supper over and that moon so bright I just had to take a little tour down the lake. The ice just starting to complain when I left. Better than a mile down I ran into a sharp breeze and fog coming up. Clouds coming over the mt. from the south to hide the moon. I turned back and soon the ice began to really act up. It is a frightening experience to have a crack come ripping by and see the ice turn wet along the crack and the ice cracking with every step until you get clear of the area. Up and down and across she ripped & tore. I felt more comfortable when I reached my beach. It kept up the disturbance for perhaps a half hr. and then stopped as suddenly as it began. I guess we shall blame it on the moon for now at 7:30 clouds have all but made it solid overcast and the lake ice is quiet. It is calm and 16°.

November 30 - Partly Cloudy, Calm & 26°.

Camera gear, ice chisel, snowshoes, spotting scope, binoculars and my lunch smoke fish and a square of Bakers semi-sweet chocolate.

I had gone nearly a mile when I heard another plane and here came Glen's yellow and blue Stinson on skis. Right down on the ice as he went by. I turned back and headed for the point. He turned and came back skis on the ice but with enough speed to fly. I waved him off and directed him towards the point. Behind the sled I jogged up the lake and directed him on the heavier ice and to stop at Carrithers' point. The ice creaked as

¹⁰² Frank Bell's cabin was on the north side of upper Twin Lakes near the head of the lake.



he neared the beach. One ski against the shore ice. "How deep is the water under that outboard ski," he asked. "Oh, not deep," and I chiseled a hole. About six inches, safe enough. He had his wife Pat¹⁰³ along. He fished out two sacks. One a yellow mail sack in case they had to air drop my mail. The other a freshly dressed chicken and a cookie can containing a fruitcake like bread with a big square of pumpkin pie in the bottom. We headed down along shore with the sled. Had they found that man Bill Johnson. Glen grinned and said, "Yes, we and he spent the night in the pass." One on one side of the big glacier and one on the other. Johnson had iced up – full power and 65 mph was the best he could do. He made a wrong turn and first thing he knew he bounced off the glacier once and a second time. He lost his ice and was flying again. He landed below (Lake Clark side) the glacier in the pass. Glen got trapped before he reached the glacier and set her down on chest deep snow. There they spent the night. He, his wife and another girl. It was raining and warm so they didn't suffer. Next morning they had visibility and got off and to Lake Clark. How was this Johnson as a pilot, I asked. Oh, he's a good pilot but doesn't use enough common sense. Doesn't know when enough is too much.

I stoked the fire and popped some corn. They had come down from school (mile 95) and had to go back tomorrow. How was everything at Port Alsworth, was Babe & Mary still planning on Hawaii for Xmas. As far as he knew they were. Dad was busy taking care of his three pigs.

December 9 – Clear, Calm & 0°.

This was one of those mornings – clear, calm and zero. It was 9:30 when the sun lighted Spike's peak and 9:50 when the Volcanic Mts. caught the first rays.

Today would be that day to go way down. Pack snowshoes and camera gear and see how the lower end lives. Smoke fish and chocolate in my jacket pocket, a little gas burner in each mitten (not necessary unless I have occasion to use my camera) and I was on my way. The lake ice like walking on concrete. One hr. to the stream and I didn't use my snowshoes for the short stretch of snow there. The bow wave of trout feeding in the smooth quiet running stream. Onto the lower lake and I have never seen it so bad when frozen. Rutted and gutted all the way. Not only the snow but the ice too. As if the wind had blown very hard when it was freezing up. I watched for a wolverine, wolf or fox to be traveling across or along shore. Lake Trout bay was better but only a little until I got near Colclatures cabin. 2 hrs. and 30 min. it had taken from my beach. On the ice out front I set up the scope for a check of Black Mt. and the ridge towards Turquoise. Both looked in good shape for sheep feed but going on down the ridge towards Bonanza Hills the snow cover became solid and the Hills themselves looked to be tough going for the rugged caribou. I couldn't see sheep and I looked close. Where would they be – perhaps behind the ridge and up the canyon past the mineral lick. The sound of a light plane up country and I saw a good looking late

¹⁰³ Patricia Elliott Alsworth, was graduated from Victory High School in Palmer and attended Lazy Mountain Bible College with her future husband Glen Alsworth in 1972-1974.

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model Cessna with tricycle gear on skis. Flying with it a red and white Super Cub. Headed towards Whitefish Lake¹⁰⁴ and I suspect they would find caribou there. On my snowshoes for two times around Arlen's cabin to check for damage by varmints. It was still as I had left it after last patching. I scooped up my gear on the lake and headed on to a high knoll below the lake and from there over to the Chilikadrotna and the survey rock for a closer look at the mt. and the ridge. The sun had already set on the thick timber country at the foot of the ridge. Another plane and this one flying low over the timber looking for moose and if he saw one he would be sure to circle for a second look but soon he came back up, a blue and yellow Piper flying low and slow. I was sure he would see me traveling on the solid white but he showed no indication that he did. In about ten minutes on his present course, he would pass my cabin – for me it would take a good three hrs.

My first time at the head of the river this late in the season and I was surprised how low the water level was. Still open and a hundred yds. out into the lake. From high ground I checked again and good. No sign of sheep or caribou. Moose of course would be in the timber brush patches and I didn't have the extra hr. needed to go there. Twenty five till two when I packed up for the return journey and I found the left side coming up worse than the left going down. The snow wind packed, drifted and frozen. Much too rough for a landing on skis. In one area ice chunks five or six inches thick standing at all angles and frozen fast. What was the condition to bring that about? As if one heavy flow of ice had traveled down the open lake and collided with ice covering the lower end.

A cool breeze at my back as I trudged the five miles, dodging this way and that to avoid slick ice and patches of breakable crust. Well up and looking up Emerson valley. The sun light was leaving the peaks but the one at the head of the valley was lighted to its very base. I was tempted to set up the camera for a time lapse of the shadow climbing but decided I had better keep moving. It was good that I did for the light on the mt. just turned pale and went out as the light left its neighbors. Evidently it is line of sight from the base of the mt. to the horizon and the setting sun. 3:15 was the time of sun set. One hr. fifty five minutes to travel the length of the lower lake and five minutes along the stream. Three thirty when I stepped out onto that perfect walking surface of the upper lake. My shoulders getting a bit weary from the pack. My legs beginning to feel the effect too. I would make it in one hr. regardless of the miles traveled and I lengthened my stride. 20 min. to Low Pass another twenty saw me opposite Gold Mt.¹⁰⁵ and fifteen more to my beach. 55 minutes equal to a hurry up trip paddling the canoe.

I had put in two sticks of wood and loaded the stove with sawdust and chips before I left. Still portions of the two left and good coals for a new start. 2° the thermometer read. It had been a perfect day for the trip. No game, all I saw was fox tracks. Game, I have more across the lake than anywhere I know of. Now I will be content to concentrate on the upper lake area.

Now at seven, clear, calm and a very surprising 13°.

¹⁰⁴ Whitefish Lake, a large non-glacial lake about 30 miles NW of the Twin Lakes in the Kuskokwim watershed; Lih Vena is the Dena'ina word for "whitefish lake."

¹⁰⁵ RLP's Gold Mountain lies on the south side of upper Twin Lakes just east of Low Pass.



December 11 – Partly Cloudy, Lt. Breeze dn. & 28°.

No airplanes at Lofstedt's, no sign of life up country so I headed back over the trail a quarter before dropping lower and into the heavy timber. There, and I passed it once before – a sawed stump and just one – very old maybe 30 or 50 years. What was the history on that cutting. Who cut it and what was the occasion. A long way from the beach and in heavy timber. What was the game situation at that time? No sign of moose so I angled down and traveled the lake ice to the sled. Something strange in the clear ice along shore. Countless strings of air bubbles frozen in the ice from top to bottom. As if air bubbles (some large, some small) were streaming up from the bottom. As the ice went down it surrounded them leaving long strings of pearls from the surface down. No where else have I seen this.

December 19 – Partly Cloudy, Calm & 0°.

The visibility improved rapidly and I rushed around for fear Babe with his daylight savings time might come and catch me eating hotcakes. I got my outgoing mail ready and wrote an extra letter. One to Dick Weiser on Kodiak.¹⁰⁶ I had never written to him since he and Randy finished their cabin, hunted one day and flew away. I wanted him to know that his cabin is still dry and snug, waiting for him to come use it. Dick always took pride in his ability as a hiker. He believed he could equal Herb Wright¹⁰⁷ and Herb was a champion. In my letter I told him Twin Lakes is still waiting to see the man who can out walk Herb Wright and me.

December 21 – Partly Cloudy, Calm & -18°.

It was all cut and dried. If the shortest of the short days was a bad one, (non flyable) I would (in respect for the bears system of spending the winter) hibernate – sleep the clock around and fast for 24 hrs. If it was cold I would keep enough fire to prevent freezing of my perishables.

When I woke up the sky appeared clear so my plan was off. The temp. had dropped steadily and the moon and stars were bright at 10:30. I watched for the sun to light Spike's peak but no sign of it. Then a high thin overcast began to appear and finally a mirage appeared along the mts. of the lower lake. The trees and landscape distorted.

¹⁰⁶ Erhardt "Dick" Weiser was a Kodiak friend of RLP who began to build a cabin about 100 yards east of Spikes cabin in the early 1970's but never finished it.

¹⁰⁷ Herb Wright was a friend of RLP who in 1960 made the first attempt to claim the land on which RLP ultimately built his cabin in 1968. Wright never built his cabin because he became terminally ill. Wright's sheep hunting camp was located off lower Twin Lakes near the Vanderpool cabin.



Warm air was moving in. The last time I had seen this happen I was at the lower end of the lower lake. The Bonanza Hills were so distorted that they looked unnatural. Now my thermometer began to rise even though it was dead calm. I put water on to heat for a bath and laundry. Start the down grade clean. The temp. came up to -10° and finally 0° .

I had wanted to visit Beech Creek and on down that side a ways – today would be a good day. By now it was overcast and too dark for filming. Binoculars, walking staff and snowshoes would go. The temp. still climbing as I left my beach. Opposite Low Pass I picked up a side wind coming down from the pass. I was headed for Emerson but made a sharp bend for the bend of the beach down country from the gravel banks. I intended to come back by way of Emerson Creek. It was snowshoes from the time I hit the beach and I would be on them for a few hrs. I traveled the high bank along Beech Creek timber for a good view of moose feeding area. Not a track. On up towards the gorge I crossed and headed down country for Dry Creek¹⁰⁸ (next creek down and always dry). The snow wind packed in places and easy going. Other areas soft and slow. Ptarmigan tracks near the willow brush. Past Dry Creek I saw old moose tracks. Nearly snowed under and made during and soon after the heavy snows. I would angle towards the lake and my high lookout knoll, cross the lake and tour Emerson Creek timber to my snowshoe trail there. Moose tracks! – two of them and the freshest I had seen for some time. A cow and calf had left the Dry Creek brush and headed down country. Along their feeding trail willow leaves on the snow were dusted with new snow – droppings frozen hard and beds icy. A few days old but tracks have way of freshening up fast if you find the moose. I would follow a while and see where they went. Typical of a feeding moose, they wandered around but the trend was down. Sunlight hit the mts. up and down and the high ridge towards Turquoise [Lake] got the treatment, a pretty sight. The light yellow from a very low sun. It was getting late and I had a long ways to go. Till now I hadn't noticed any great amount of wind coming down. I went nearly to the pass that leads to the inside passage of the Volcanic Mts. before I turned off and headed for the lower lake. No more moose tracks but the trail of what appeared to be a land otter in the soft snow. Just a smooth trench where he had slid along. I had glassed the country from the slope of the mt. so didn't climb my look out knoll though I passed at the base of it.

Now I knew what I was up against. The wind was strong down the lake. Enough drifted snow to make it tough walking and packing snowshoes which have considerable wind resistance. More than a mile to the stream and then snowshoes to the upper lake. A nice flock of ptarmigan flew from along the stream. The upper lake was not a purty sight. Snow was blowing and so much of it that it appeared very much like vapor during a cold day before freeze up. Three miles of that to face without a break wasn't to my liking. When I hit the upper lake I didn't remove my snowshoes but headed for the cottonwoods near O'Connel's cabin. Crossed the creek flat and into the woods again. I had thought of this when I made the snowshoe trail to Emerson. I angled up the slope until I hit it. What a pleasure to travel a well packed trail – the wind in the trees over head and me cozy warm. It was getting quite dark and would be too dark to follow the trail by the time I reached

¹⁰⁸ RLP's Dry Creek is on the south side of lower Twin Lakes just west of Beech Creek.



Falls Creek. If I didn't miss the junction I would drop down to Jerre's cabin. Something nice about snowshoeing a broken trail in the heavy timber with darkness closing down on you. A spruce grouse flushed from a tree along the trail and further a second one. I would have expected them to sit tight in the near darkness. The trail very dim by the time I walked out onto the lake ice. I could still see Hope Creek gorge and headed for it. The wind not quite so strong and no snow blowing. 5:15 when I reached the cabin, temp. 26° and coals in the stove. It had been a good day. I feel sure there is a cow and calf moose feeding an area between where I left their tracks and the big opening by the Pyramid Mt.¹⁰⁹

Supper over and dishes done. My journal up to date. The wind is still strong in the spruce – the moon visible and the temp. 26°.

By now I suspect Babe and Mary are somewhere over the blue Pacific or among the palm trees on the island of Oahu.

By this date we have gained three minutes in the evening sunsets and still have three to lose on sunrises – so – this is the shortest day of 1974.

December 22 – Partly Cloudy, Calm & 27°.

I discovered that I had a problem. Water was leaking in on the eave log and running down the inside. It appeared that either there was condensation between or a leak in the polyethylene and water is running down between it and the tar paper...I had tarred a patch of roofing paper...The paper warmed and neatly folded to make a good thick patch...my patch had hooked in the hole and torn it bigger. I soon had one cured only to have it start...to the left. This was a leaker for sure and a tough one to get at...A tarred patch was out of the question. How about some okum with tar. It went in solid and the hole in the dike was plugged. I watched for more but none dared to appear. Some jet fuel B to clean the tar from whatever needed cleaning. Soap and water to finish the job and I was soon ready for Christmas company. It would have been a sad state of affairs to have water running down the wall of this most famous of the famous cabins in Alaska.

December 23 – Overcast, Calm & 14°.

After breakfast I went for my days water supply. Coming up the path with my two buckets when I really got a jolt. About an eight foot section of the side of the cabin looked like a waterfall after freeze up. I had stopped the leaks on the inside and now it had run down on the outside. What a mess and something would have to be done. It was caused by heat from the stove warming the roof on both sides of the ridge. Water had come to the eave over hang but could go no farther because of ice build up the thickness of the moss.

¹⁰⁹ RLP's Pyramid Mountain is on south side of lower Twin Lakes near the Gatano cabin.

LAKE CLARK CONNECTIONS
- A LIFE AT TWIN LAKES



1974

I fueled and fired up the little Coleman single burner stove. Made a bail to hang it by, drove some nails and bent hooks to hang it under the eave along the offending section. Soon I could feel the moss above the roof covering getting soft but very little water came to the edge. On a length of Jerre's no. 9 wire I bent a tight loop to prevent gouging the polyethylene and ran it up between it and the moss. I could get to the eave log but there it hesitated. A little prodding and poking and it broke through and out came the water in a steady stream. Soon it had stopped dripping at the wall. At three places I warmed the over hang but nearly all of the water had leaked out of the first opening. While the little Coleman did its work I chipped the ice from the logs and ran some hot water down to get what was left. The ram rod stays in place so next time if ever all I have to do is hang the stove or gas lantern under the eave to get that warm water started through.

December 24 – Overcast, Calm & 20°.

I did a bit of reading of magazines collected during the summer and went through half of my Dec. journal. Pretty tame reading now and I wonder how it will be in a dozen years from now. It would be interesting to reread from April 29 and estimate the miles I have covered since that date. 1,500 would be a real conservative estimate in my mind and I wonder how close I am.

Recently I have been thinking of a good hike on snowshoes and only one thing holds me back and that is perishables freezing in my cabin while I am away. Pack my Eddie Bauer sleeping bag, a tarp, axe and some grub and head for Port Alsworth. I could make it in two days easy enough. Go through Low Pass and down the Kijik to Lachbuna Lake and from the lower end take a sharp left and through a pass to the head of Portage Creek. Down the creek to the lake and travel the lake to Tanalian point¹¹⁰ and Babe's bay [Hardenburg Bay]. It would be a good exercise and to return over a broken trail would be a breeze. It would be done after mid Feb. when the days are longer and less chance of things freezing here.

December 25 – Partly Cloudy, Calm & 2°.

And a Merry Christmas to you too. The sky appeared clear in the early morning light but it wasn't long before a high thin overcast made itself known. The temp. dropped to 0° as sunrise came near. Spike's peak caught the first rays at 9:45 my time, but it didn't last. The light turned pale and died. A low overcast began to form.

After getting my water supply and putting a tub full on the stove for a bath and to wash my bed tarp, I buckled on my snowshoes and laid out a neat little airstrip on the

¹¹⁰ Tanalian Point was the original name of the location now called Port Alsworth (1950); it was also known as Walker's Camp and Tanalian, originally it was a small Euroamerican-Dena'ina hamlet dating from about 1909. The Dena'ina word Tanilen Vetnu, means "flows into water stream."



solid white to make depth perception easier. Six round trips 220 yds. long. That would test the skill of whoever came.

My Christmas dinner bird had come in to hang by the stove pipe again. To cook it all at one time I would need a bigger kettle – so I went up to the point for a good big aluminum kettle that Jim Shake had left. The bird thawed and limber I proceeded to dismember it. Two legs, two wings, neck, breast and back. As I worked forward I ran into a packet of chicken feed and it was fortunate that I found it. The kettle scoured and rinsed standing by. First I would brown the pieces a bit in bacon grease using my big cast iron skillet. First I salted & peppered and rubbed them with flour. The grease hot, I arranged them in the skillet and put the lid on. By now my bed tarp was taking advantage of the cooking fire. Out of the frying pan into the kettle of hot water, seasoned with various spices and fresh onion. The operation was going according to plan when I discovered that my dish rag was missing. Perhaps I had thrown it out with the last water but I failed to find it. It couldn't have gone far and I was beginning to think it was boiling with the chicken when I discovered it under foot.

Dinner would be served about three thirty if the chicken was tender and being small it probably would be. I saved the drippings from the frying for gravy. I had some raspberry jello setting up in my 0° cooler on the table outside. The chicken well along I added some egg noodles and later some dumplings. A chunk of carrot would be my green stuff. Dinner was served at 3:15 – the chicken done enough but required a little more salt. Mashed potatoes and brown gravy, noodles & dumplings. Sourdough biscuits and honey. Jello and hot chocolate later. I did away with a drumstick, thigh and two wings. A couple helpings of noodles and three dumplings. By the time I had finished I was uncomfortable. My birds knew it was Christmas and came for many helpings of hotcake. The young one is beginning to fit in now and the old ones accepting him.

Dishes done by a quarter past four. I would take a walk to settle my dinner. On with my tin pants, jacket and big wool shawl. I would go down the lake a stretch. The temp. 6° and clearing – the moon would be out soon. Dead calm, a good evening for a walk and I kept going. At the beach of Emerson Creek flat I turned back. The moon big and hazy. No problem to follow my trail. I was back by six and feeling much better. Fingers too stiff to write without a good warming. Now at 7:15, a light breeze up the lake, snowing lightly. The moon not as bright and the temp. up 4° to a +10°. Christmas of 1974 nearly past. Will it be an easy trail to the next one?

December 26 – Partly Cloudy, Breeze up & -2°.

The sun light had struck the peaks and started down the ridges but it was weak and soon faded. The wind picked up and the temp. started down. By noon it was a -10° with a chill factor maybe 40 below. No day for joy walking on the lake. I had more (only a few) letters to write and I would be caught up. Then there was the roll of maps covering the proposed Lake Clark National Park to study and wonder what some other areas of the park must



be like. It would be great sport with a little float plane to tour it and stop at all the good sized lakes for a day or two.

More studying of my flying material and correcting of my December journal. Before I realized it possible it was getting dark. A few items to get down from the cache and a couple lengths of wood to saw and split – keep a small deposit going into my wood bank. This wasn't a day heavy on the use of water and I would have plenty to carry me over but just to keep in practice I opened the water hole for one bucket. Down on the lake I could hear very sharp reports of the ice expanding in the cold.

Christmas leftovers for supper, chicken and noodles along with the fresh beans I had cooked and didn't sample yesterday.

A blast of fog as I opened the door to go empty my dish water and I knew it was getting colder still. The moon only two days till full boldly boring its way through the thin overcast. Light snow pelted me in the face. A thermometer check had it at a -15°. Cold weather is to be expected for winter is officially here.

December 27 – Clear, Calm & -36°.

Today I would go down country. I wanted to get the low sun traveling the ridge to the south. I dressed warm and tucked a little stove in each Air Force mitten and then I heard a plane. Who would be flying -36° weather. It came over the Volcanic Mts. and up the lake. A [Cessna] 180 by the sound of it. Closer and I could see red & white and blue – Voight!¹¹¹ and he circled twice before touching down. His son David with him. He slid in close and shut her off. Merry Christmas was his greeting. "I'm sorry to be late but I couldn't get this silly thing started yesterday." Lots of cargo. Frozen stuff, fresh stuff, dry stuff, packages, and mail, lots of it. We lugged the stuff to the cabin. Would they eat some popcorn. "Oh don't bother," but it was no bother and I stoked the fire to super hot. I sorted mail and popped corn. "Now don't pop more this will do us." But I kept popping and the big mixing bowl didn't seem to fill. How was everything at the ranch. "Oh fine. Babe and Mary got away on schedule. Babe was so anxious to get going that he hardly had time to give me instructions on caring for the goats, chickens, & pigs (3). Mary was the same – like two little kids going on a picnic. They climbed in the 180 and were gone. Polar Airways is making money now, boy. Got another [Aero] Commander and fly two twin Pipers plus a Cessna 206. That run to Valdez is really paying off."

We had put the motor cover on the [Cessna] 180. A flashy red custom made job that can be put on while wearing mittens. Loops of heavy cord and big wooden toggles to complete the job. No caribou in sight but he (Voight) had bagged a tough old bull moose who had been in many battles – ribs that had been broken and healed. Old wounds in a hind quarter and he wasn't fat. Bee had got one too out of a bunch of seven.

¹¹¹ Voight Clum, aircraft mechanic and Alsworth son-in-law is married to Margaret "Sis" Alsworth, lives in Anchorage; David Clum was his 8-year old son.

